a cosmos original
Wild Flowers and Weak Men published 2024 Copyright © John A.Walker 2024.
The right of John A.Walker to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1998.
All the characters in this book are fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.
Conditions of Sale:
1. This book is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Cosmos Original Productions. Set in Baskerville published by Cosmos Original Productions, Glasgow.

Job 12:23-24 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. 24He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.

Wild Flowers and Weak Men

To those who will build the new country we live in.

Prologue

At this time in the land of Scotia there came an evil spirit. It was obvious to the observant eye what had happened; the nation had fallen away from believing in God. The ruler the people called Mag the Monster. The party she represented went by the name of the Virtual Party. It was her government, seeing how things had changed, brought in new legislation to promote non belief.

This was indeed a fundamental change that happened in the land of Scotia after the Virtual party came to power. Like all political parties before them to gain power they offered the people

what they thought they wanted. And when they got it, they changed the name of the nation to Scotia, and not only that they changed all the names of towns and villages too. Moreover, they proclaimed that the past must be forgotten about; for everything from now on will be virtual.

People soon woke up to what they were doing. However it was too late. In power, the Virtual Party's raison d'etre was to transform the nation of Scotia into a complete virtual state.

This is the story of one man's struggle to overthrow the virtual world, and chase away the evil spirit, and bring back the nation to a Christian land.

1

The will of man is a strange thing of that there is no doubt. His friends called him Stan the Man. At the outset what can be said about him was that Stan got on with just about everyone in life. However, not everyone got on with Stan the Man.

'Stan has got a mind of his own,' that's what the people said about him.

When he had reached the great age of forty, Stan felt that it was time for him to settle down,

and true to his word, he married his childhood sweetheart Mary.

Folks that knew them could see they were a happy and contented couple. They seemed to have everything they needed. His wife had a steady job with Dùn Èideann council, and Stan had a regular job as a mariner.

They had known each other for a long time, still it was a great surprise to Mary when Stan left his job as a mariner and took up the role as a full time preacher out in the streets of the capital city. Everyone knew Stan was religious; he never missed a Sunday service. No one, not even Mary, though thought that he would one day become a street preacher.

Every day now Stan went out onto the capital streets of Dùn Èideann and spoke to the people there. He proclaimed the organised church and the state were lost, and that both were well worth avoiding.

"To be saved you must repent and believe the Gospel," was the eternal message he preached to whoever would listen to him.

Even though there were laws against religious conversion, Stan told everyone he met they were living in a time of great upheaval, and that they

should be wary of being controlled by unseen forces.

Stan could see - like everyone else - the established church was no more than an extension of the state. Of course, there were countries like this all over the world. However, the country that he had been born into church and state had always been separate since 1560. "The Confession of Faith must return," he proclaimed now daily on the streets of the capital.

As has been said at this time, the newly elected government was called the Virtual party. It should be noted that many political writers and commentators believed the party was formed after a loss of confidence in the traditional parties by the electorate. The socialists, conservatives and nationalists all seemed to be out of date these days.

Certainly, at the last election, people had opted for something different. The VP party, as they were called on the street, were made up of young and old, and their agenda went something like this:

If you put your trust in the virtual party; its virtual members we will help you. The Virtual

party believe that the world is controlled by virtual barons, and the Virtual party will help you deal with them, along with the tech giants, in the new post Internet age. Living in a virtual world is easy when you have a virtual representative to act on your behalf.

Indeed that was the case, their slogan at the last election was: 'Vote for the VP party and you will be safe in the virtual world.' This had a great effect on citizens. The people bought into it, lock stock and digital patter, as the new saying goes, and that is how the Virtual party came to power.

As they got ready to head out for their Friday night out, Mary, Stan's wife, did what she always did, she fussed about the living room, tidying the cushions, then after that she phoned her sister Martha. Mary always gave her sister a quick update on how the week had gone before the weekend.

Normally, the end of the week chat was uplifting. However, tonight Mary after she came off the phone looked perplexed. She confirmed her thoughts to her husband a few moments later: "Stan, that Virtual party are up to no good. Martha was just telling me on the phone, the

parents there on the west coast are trying to stop the school changing their children into virtual creatures."

"Quite right too, my dear."

"She was telling me what kind of things they are teaching the young ones at school. It is dreadful, Stan."

Mary was never one to get down though and, after this outburst, she smiled, picked up her coat, off the chair in the living room, and walked to the front door. Knowing it was the weekend, in her usual way, she quipped: "Well, Stan, are you ready for our night out in the capital?"

"Sure am my dear," he said standing beside her, "With the Fringe on, the city will no doubt be busy tonight. Come on, let's go."

2

Presently, the happy couple headed for the far end of Doddle Street to a popular restaurant there they liked to go to. The eatery the Olive Cafe was on the left hand side inside an old church.

After the meal sitting there enjoying a coffee, Stan spotted two familiar faces, two tables down from them.

It is fair to say that after the Stephen Deacon affair most people in the capital had heard about the two famous virtual detectives: Inspector Fusby

and his sidekick Inspector Lance. Even though most folks had never met them, they were no strangers to the citizens of Dùn Èideann at this time during the days of the virtual parliament.

Every day on all platforms, Fusby and Lance appeared all over the Internet, on news feeds, radio shows, social media and TV blogs. This was due to their new found fame, after arresting the free thinker who went by the name of Stephen Deacon.

All directives were carried out on the orders of the virtual leader Mag the Monster. There was no doubt about it, this was a dark era for freethinkers, never mind those who liked to speak what was in their minds.

Free thinkers - there was still a few left - maintained the hate speech bill that had just recently been passed hated everyone, and the conversion bill, on its way through the virtual parliament, made a mockery of free expression, the justice system, human rights, and whatever else had integrity left in the nation of Scotia at this time. Everything seemed dark in the land of Scotia with the Virtual party now in power.

Fusby and Lance may have been Gonzo characters, and laughed at by most citizens, but

the virtual police were most definitely worth avoiding. Their department, the section who arrested citizens for virtual crimes, kept tabs on everyone in the land of Scotia. All the virtual officers who worked there lived in the shadows, and pounced on anyone who spoke out, or said something, against the virtual state.

In his usual way like a little goblin or gnome, Fusby had wandered in off the street into the Olive Cafe for something to eat with his deputy. The folks in the restaurant could see Fusby was a little fat chap who had a cheery face. He was now staring at the menu in anticipation of what he could fill his large belly with.

On the other hand Lance, his deputy, sitting opposite him had a long thin face and an even longer body. He was not staring at the menu, but at the people around him. For whatever reason, he seemed to have fixed on a man who was sitting at the far end of the restaurant. By the look on his stern face anyone who looked at him would not be wrong in wondering if he was about to arrest that man.

Just by looking at this tall thin man you could tell Lance was a hypochondriac, and most definitely a loner. However, in the capital they

were the pride and joy of the newly formed virtual police unit. They were always arresting dodgy characters in the city. Well, that's what the blogs and posts said about them anyway.

The old fashioned press loved them too; they always promoted Fusby and Lance to the hilt. The staff of course in the restaurant knew who they were, and were attentive to their every needs. Needless to say on social media, they were lauded there too by virtual artists and writers:

'Detectives Fusby and Lance are active every day stamping out virtual crime wherever they go,' said the latest virtual press release sent out to all comers just last week.

If there was an online incident anywhere in the capital involving virtual crime, the state owned media would play their favourite jingle, before the presenter cried out: 'Send for Fusby and Lance. They are the boys to shutdown virtual crime.'

The Virtual party leader was of course more famous than Fusby and Lance. On the street she went by the name of Mag the Monster. It didn't seem to bother the leader though what people

thought about her, or even what some brave souls posted about her on social media. Many bloggers referred to her as Scotia's first virtual numpty.

It was well known that Mag the Monster was full of hate for everything, and there was no doubt about what she really hated most of all: real life and real people. She attacked them constantly: "Tell them they should live online," she was always screaming at her advisors and critics. "Don't they know real life is over! They must become virtual creatures, or else they will be excluded from the virtual state…"

Up until last year, Fusby and Lance in the virtual police office had just been one of the boys, that is until they got publicity over the Stephen Deacon affair. They became famous after they infiltrated the freedom demonstration, going on in the city and arrested the wanted man, Stephen, the well known free thinker and religious zealot.

It was of course professionally done, but the publicity they received from this case was way over the top. Fellow officers in the virtual police office could not understand the change in Fusby and Lance after the Stephen Deacon affair. The strange thing was though - it never seemed to die down.

Virtual police officers would often chat to each other in the office about how they had changed. After reading social media reports about their colleagues, they could be overheard saying: "Who are these people who write every day about Fusby and Lance?"

Lanky Lance was not social in the least. However, Fusby was. They may have been mates in the virtual crime division, but they were completely different characters in their own right.

Everyone in the office definitely noticed the change in both men after the Stephen Deacon affair, when the reports first started appearing about them on line. Their colleagues were not sure anymore how to react to them.

It was plain to see to all in the office that the publicity had gone straight to their heads. Some officers in the virtual police office said that Lance now looked like a politician, the way he strolled about the office, and Fusby acted like a celebrity chef, or news presenter. The latter certainly was fond of his food - there was no doubt about that. It was known he always had cranberries and raisins in his pocket and would eat them constantly between meals.

As you can imagine many jokes were doing the rounds these days in the virtual police office about Fusby and Lance. “Have you heard the king has asked to see them?”

“What about?”

“The king says the prince is stalking him online.”

“Send for Fusby and Lance!” the young officers would shout out.

Everyone in the virtual office knew that both detectives, Fusby and Lance, worshiped Mag the Monster. After all, it was her who had promoted them after the success of the Stephen Deacon affair.

The virtual cops, Fusby and Lance were so taken by their leader, Mag the Monster, they stopped everyone in the office telling jokes about her: “The head of the Virtual party is to be respected,” was how Fusby put it to them, in an email memo.

Up until this point some of the officers had been referring to Mag as just the Monster, or Mrs Goebbels, or Jenny Greenteeth.

“This will not be allowed,” Fusby had warned his colleagues,” when it came to his attention, “If

I hear of that again, the officer saying these things will be charged with hate speech."

Everyone now knew that when Fusby and Lance were in the office they would have to watch their p's and q's. All the young officers who joined this section recently were quickly warned about this and reprimanded if they used derogatory language against the leader of the Virtual party.

The older officers got the message too: if they stepped out of line they would be sanctioned. Even though the young officers complied with the directive from Commander Fusby, they spoke about Mag the Monster behind her back. They knew Fusby loved Mag the Monster so much so that he would make a case against his mother if she said anything against the virtual leader. However, that did not seem to stop them.

Just last month, one virtual cop was suspended for his description in an email to a colleague, saying: "She is just another woman who wants to be a man." The threats made against the lads in the office did not stop the fun though. One officer went further and wrote to another: "She is a good man, you know."

4

In this time of the virtual parliament there was a policy that men should be feminised, and women masculinised. However, not all were. Some citizens gave nothing away and pleaded ignorance to such things as being aligned to the feminine cult of the time. Many just kept their heads down; for Mag the Monster's attitude they knew to the opposite sex was abhorrent.

This is why Stan the Man preached on the street warning men to de feminise themselves and for women to be maternal. The virtual cops knew

there were many writers who did not like the virtual world, some were prosecuted others left alone.

On the other hand, Fusby and Lance were quite happy working for their 'virtual queen' as they called her. After they received the award for shutting down Stephen Deacon, the two virtual detectives were forever praising her in the office where they worked.

Little did they know though that some of the officers made fun of them behind their backs. Bert an older officer who was just about to retire, and who came from Faukirke, called them Burke and Hare, after the two famous gravediggers. This went down well with all the young lads. "Live like a man and die like one," was what Bert always said to them.

On the street the virtual detectives were sometimes referred to as Mags Men. Not all virtual cops were affected by this though. Feminine officers who tried to condition them into the cult, for the most part were just ignored. They did this even though bad comments were posted about them on websites and blogs, or even in old fashioned newspapers, or written on the walls inside public toilets: 'Right wing;

homophobic; misogynist;' was the usual things they said.

Fusby and Lance were so loyal to the queen bitch, as the old saying goes, that if Mag the Monster jumped in the river, they would duly follow her in.

Before they sat down at their table inside the restaurant, Mary fumed: "She is like a virtual creature from some dark corner of the Internet."

Known for his sense of humour, Stan the Man always had a joke or funny comment ready at hand. In a comic Geordie accent, he suggested: "She will not spoil our night out lass. Come on, what are you having to drink?"

Mary of course had seen Mag the Monster coming and going inside the council office where she had worked for over a year now. She knew at the moment there was a concentrated effort by rich tech giants to have everyone and everything connected live on the Internet.

Those who followed the virtual leader it was generally accepted that they lived in a world where everything was virtual - even people. "Aye, the best version of yourself is your virtual self" is how they put it.

This promotion of the virtual self essentially went something like this: you can be anything you want when you live in the virtual world. Your profile online will identify you along with others as a virtual creature, and how you want to be described and seen by others.

The Virtual party, headed by Mag the Monster, was indeed going all out to convert citizens into becoming virtual creatures. In this virtual world they promoted that if you felt you were a cat, then that is how others should see you, that was the basic idea.

Stan at the moment knew there was a joke doing the rounds and, as they waited for the waitress to take their order, he teased his wife by telling her what he had heard: "Mary did you hear about the young lady who wanted to be identified online as a wheelie bin?"

"No, I did not Stan," laughed Mary.

"Yes, she wants to be taken out every second Thursday

"Oh, Stan."

Strange but true, the government of the day - the Virtual party - set up laws to promote all this kind of nonsense. This allowed citizens to indulge themselves in crazy non binary ideas, if they so

wished or desired. After all, you could be anything you wanted to be in the virtual world. There was no one to stop you - was there? This idea of being a virtual creature came straight from the party manifesto.

As has been documented, the Virtual party formed a new virtual police unit not long after they had got into power. They were very much up and running, by this time, combing the Internet night and day for those who did not adhere to their virtual laws.

Virtual policemen only really went out now into the real world to arrest someone on the orders of Mag the Monster. Lance who shared the office with his commander Fusby was experienced in this kind of work. After all, they at one time had been both real cops. Due to their experience they were often called on to arrest citizens by their virtual leader.

Fusby and Lance were what used to be called in the old days plain clothes detectives. Fusby, who was short and fat and looked not unlike a barrel of apples. You could never call him sartorial, but that did not matter to him; he always put on his best suit when going out into the real world to arrest someone.

Fusby was also well known for crunching on apples in the virtual police office as he surfed away on his computer, scanning for conversations, images and stories for potential hate speech. Anyone that he thought fell foul of the new virtual laws, he activated a 614 code against them right away. As soon as that was done, he would alert his second in command Mr Lance, send an email to the leader's office for verification, then they would head out to arrest the suspect.

Fusby loved knocking on doors. He was extremely polite. In his cultivated west of Scotia accent, he would say: "Good morning. My name is Mr Fusby, and this is Mr Lance. We are here to arrest you on a virtual charge. Would you please organise yourself and come with us to the virtual custody suite ."

When Fusby got a call that morning from Mag the Monster about a new virtual mission, he was over the moon, he beamed like a man coming out of a pub after a belly full of beer.

People in the office who knew Fusby could see that as soon as Mag phoned him, his whole being changed. Dancing about the office, the chief of the department sought out his deputy inspector

Lance to tell him that they were once more on another virtual case.

Lance, his right hand man, was completely different from him in every way. Thin and over six foot tall, Lance was called by his mates in the office 'the undertaker'. His face for whatever reason always looked strained even when he was off duty. His virtual police mates said that this was because of all the anti depressants he was taking.

Fusby on the other hand was always happy and jolly. The fat little gnome did not change in or out of the office and, as everyone in the office knew, neither did his other half, Inspector Lance. He was always miserable.

Mag the Monster was anti everything, especially Christianity. She rolled out lots of virtual nonsense to promote her prejudices. As all her officials knew gender change was her favourite policy to antagonize her opponents. Anyone who was unsure of what sex they were; they were a friend indeed of the Virtual party.

The party could not get enough of gender madness. Another campaign Mag promoted to the hilt was girl power: "Women should rule the world," she often screamed this at her advisors.

“Why don’t you read the virtual writers there’s loads of them up there.”

She had heard of Stan the Man before and had been updated about him by her virtual policemen. “He may be a likeable rogue, but he knows what’s coming to him,” she often spat at them.

Most of the nonsense was outputted not from the Virtual party’s government office in the heart of the capital in the city centre, but from a bar across the road called Beaton’s Bar. This is where Mag went to meet her one and only friend Julie Jack

Julie had been a minister in Austria before converting to the female sex. Julie Jack seemed an appropriate name for her. She proved herself every day a good PA for the virtual leader. The transition from one gender to the other and from one country to another went pretty smoothly for the virtual PA.

This job in virtual politics, in the government office, at the young age of twenty one, suited her right down to her false boobs. It was well known it was only feminised men that Mag the Monster allowed in her virtual cabinet.

Both Fusby and Lance had been converted into her feminine cult not long after Mag had come to power. They were safe from persecution for the moment. Seeing that to get anywhere in the virtual police force you had to embrace all the nonsense of the virtual world. Wherever Fusby and Lance went they were always happy to promote the divine feminine cult of the virtual leader.

4

In the district known as the Chambers, while at work in the council office in the city, Mary got wind that Mag the Monster, along with her PA, Julie Jack, was going to be paying them a visit today.

Early on that morning before she started her shift, she overheard colleagues in the ladies' room talking about this: "Have you heard, the first Numpty is coming to see us today," said one to another in a derogatory tone.

All the council workers knew the first virtual minister liked to surprise them with flying visits. It was not unusual for her to turn up unannounced.

And right enough just after the morning tea break a meeting was called over the sound system, by the head of department Mr Gates: 'All staff are to proceed to the Walter Scott suite at midday,' this command went throughout all the different departments inside the Chambers.

Bang on time, right on the stroke of twelve o'clock in marched the First minister with her PA, Julie Jack. Once on her feet at the meeting, Mag the Monster wasted no time in telling the council staff: "Our target is to make our nation completely virtual by the end of this parliament. Everyone is to become a virtual citizen, and if they do not agree to that they won't get any benefits. The virtual citizen does not need religion, family or friends. All they need is an Internet connection? This message is to go out from all government departments into schools, civic authorities, as well as all offices right throughout our virtual nation."

Even though it is true to say most council workers appeased the virtual state and its leader,

this got a round of applause from some of the staff who were well aware of her antics.

The first virtual minister had appeared many times before here in this office, and you could see by the faces the majority in the Walter Scott suite today were resigned to sitting through another one of her bizarre briefings.

In any effect, the council staff knew they could not change any policy inside the virtual parliament. It was a waste of time trying to do so by asking questions, or arguing over this or that point, or proposal.

This morning Fusby , and Lance were of course on security duties and when the former saw that no one was engaging with their virtual leader, Fusby thought he had better pipe up and say something. He usually did this kind of thing at her meetings just to show total support for the virtual leader, who he knew was in complete control of the virtual parliament.

So from the back of the room in a polite cultured tone, Fusby lauded her: "Virtual leader, would you agree, we need another press release to update the nation, letting all citizens know that we are to become a fully fledged virtual nation by the end of this fiscal year."

Before she could answer him, a deep almost angry tone standing beside little Fusby barked: “I quite agree with that” said the man with the long face, “We need to let people know what is happening, in our country.”

Fusby once he started was difficult to stop; his polite tone and his beaming face were really quite inoffensive. In an assured voice he hurried on: “Yes, that is correct, Mr Lance. First minister we will be able to capture more criminals who are up to no good by using the new Face Grab technology you have bought for our team at the virtual police office. I must record here that this has been a most welcomed addition to our unit and of course we have the Mr Woke program ongoing that engages with citizens online …” and on and on he went like some chirpy radio broadcaster.

Mag the Monster was delighted with this. She smiled and stared at the little fat man at the back of the room, over the row of chairs that had been hastily arranged for her meeting. She like others could see her security men were there to protect her. Just by the way she stared at the head of security there was no doubt about it, inspector Fusby was her favourite virtual policeman.

After a few dramatic taps on the laptop computer in front of her, the First Virtual minister took to the mic again and continued her speech on what she had come to say. In a tone that was almost humble, she went on: "I quite agree, Mr Fusby, and be reassured I will see to it that your office is constantly updated as to the new software being released."

After the meeting, unknown to her colleagues in the office, secretary Mary Knox originally from Hadda's Tun, who was a believer, and a member of the newly formed White church, handed in her resignation.

She had had enough of the devil worshiper, Mag the Monster, and all her virtual friends. No one in their right mind could work for such a woman, or the government she represented.

Mary's lovely polite manner had stood her in good stead. She had managed to escape all the nonsense going on inside the council office.

Nevertheless, the roll out of the new virtual legislation, that everyone had to become a virtual creature or at least have a virtual profile, with their details online, was the last straw for her. To become a virtual creature was the last straw. Mary would give up her wage and her pension; for a

real life in a real world with her husband Stan the Man and their daughter little Sarah.

It was well known that thought control was now at an all time high in the virtual state. Up until this point, Mary had managed to handle all the changes in the office. However, she had had enough now that they were being asked not only not to show any crucifixes in the office, but to go on same sex parades in the capital, when they had their annual summer march through the city centre.

This was a sign to her the state was now controlling their citizens by making them accept their virtual policies. Not only that, they were told that they had to wear the emblems of the virtual political party who supported the aforementioned in the office and at home. It was now a fait accompli: you had to become a virtual being to work, receive money and other benefits. The only alternative was to be an outlaw.

It was plain to Stan and Mary what they should do. After all, her husband was always telling her: “Get out of there Mary before they bring some case against you; for not being a virtual creature.”

At this time in life it is fair to say that most citizens were lost inside a virtual world. The most worrying thing was that the state were not just controlling its workers, but the churches too.

On the day when Mary was leaving her employment, Mag the Monster paid an unannounced visit to the local council office. And as her dark shadow went by Mary's desk, she overheard the virtual minister's surreptitious voice say to her: "Oh, I hear you are leaving us."

Mary looked up and nodded, then went back to work on the latest press release. Mercifully, she knew this would be her last one she would send out on behalf of the virtual state.

After Mag the Monster had disappeared into the department head's office, Mary relaxed and reread the latest Press Release to herself that she had to send. It did not make happy reading. This she knew was to be sent from her office to all live news sites before midday:

From the beginning of the new month every citizen who wishes to receive state benefits must identify themselves as being a virtual creature.

Press Releases from the virtual parliament were sent out daily so that people sitting at home, or even in the office, were kept up to date on what they should be doing. The VP party logo was an ominous sign for most citizens when they saw it popping into their in trays, or flashing up on their smart phones. Everyone knew these days they were being watched and controlled by the virtual state, and they had to pay attention to the directives they were being sent.

6

Walking along the high street, Stan glanced at the latest offer from the Virtual party beaming out at the shoppers from a large outdoor flatscreen monitor. He knew how they did things at the virtual h.q. office. After all, Mary his wife worked there. Every night, his wife told him what was going on behind the scenes. Stan understood of course the political shenanigans within the council; for as they said on the street: “Nothing goes by Stan the Man,” is what the people said about him.

Nearing the end of her last shift, Mary sat there in the office with nothing much to do. As she pondered her future a story on the virtual radio website caught her attention. When she glanced at the heading she read again the website. Mary smiled to herself; for she knew who they were talking about:

A new book called *Wild Flowers and Weak Men* will be released this Friday. The author has agreed to be interviewed by Virtual Radio the same day. From his previous books listeners will know the author has alternative views about how and why men should seek help to de feminise themselves. We await news about this new offering from the writer who the people in the capital call the Covenanter.

"Good for you Stan. You know how to upset the virtual numpties," laughed Mary, as she quickly came out of the webpage and went back to work.

Mary knew her husband, whose blog name was Covenanter, was sought after by the authorities for urging all men to react against the state's virtual programmes and gender madness.

He was so funny with it too. She knew what Stan was doing was turning everything on its head. He made them look like what they were: ridiculous.

Most women loved Stan the Man; they did not want to see their sons and daughters converted into virtual creatures. Women of all ages liked to read his books. Today's offering online advertising his new novel she knew would be rubbished by the deep state. Stan was unapologetic though. Mary knew that her husband was unstoppable. His great gift was he made fun of everything. One of Stan's Famous quotes was:

'Men and women are different creatures. Men have to learn to drink like men and not like women. Men and women are not the same. Don't you think a man when he goes to the bar should stand with his pint in his hand, bull like, and stick out his crotch as if he is ready to conquer the world,' that usually got the numpties going.

That evening after work, as Mary Knox went out of the front door of the council office, she knew she would not be going back again. Mary was not upset at all; she had arranged to meet Stan in town to celebrate her leaving the council

office. He did not know that though. When she got a quiet moment she would tell him.

8

As ever on a Friday, Dùn Èideann city centre was lively with tourists and revellers. As planned she met Stan outside their favourite restaurant on Doddle Street. After a kiss, a hug and a clasping of hands, they went into the restaurant the Olive Cafe. Little did the Virtual party leader, Mag the Monster, know that Mary's other half was the man the virtual police were after.

Online every day now, Stan the Man encouraged young and old to reject the virtual world and all the nonsense that went on within it.

Stan knew the authorities did not like him, and that they would arrest him when they got an excuse to do so. So far they had not been given the chance to do that.

Stan the Man had been floating around media sites for a while now trying to bring about a Reformation. His blog name after all was Covenanter.

When asked by others, Stan always spoke passionately about this: "Our country has gone to the dogs. The wonderful history we have been given has been forgotten about. The tech giants have put a magic spell on the people of our great country. Our nation has been infiltrated by virtual people. They have turned our men into women and our women into men. I tell you it is true what I say: the virtual numpties are behind it. They even hypnotise the young into changing their sex. The majority of citizens are now too weak to stand up to them. Reformation! We must have a Reformation. Both the church and state must be reformed!"

Yes, that was the war cry on the street from the man everyone knew as the Covenanter, Stan the Man. However, it was the weekend now and

like many others the end of the working week was a time to relax.

Stan and Mary were looking forward to having a meal and something to drink in the capital Dùn Èideann city. This had been the traditional way of the Scotia people for generations now, going out for a night on the town at the weekend to enjoy themselves.

'You'll have had your tea,' was still a great joke though in the city."

Stan got a laugh when he said this to Mary as they waited to be offered a table in the Olive Cafe. Their church friends knew that Stan and Mary were always generous to everyone who came to see them, even though everyone was not kind and helpful who spoke with them.

Outwith the church, it was well known that many people reported what they were up to, back to the virtual police. Of course, they knew this, but they did not say anything. The snitchers usually told the authorities what they already knew; for mass surveillance was in operation in every sector of society. What was happening was like the Stasi before them, the virtual police had a file on everyone.

It was good luck, they got their favourite table where they liked to sit over by the faraway wall. Once seated they both relaxed and waited once more for the waitress to come over and serve them. Lovely food was on its way.

"So, what were the virtual people saying in the office today, then?" Stan asked Mary his wife.

"You are never going to believe this, Stan."

"I, am Mary."

"They are now going to make it illegal to live outside the virtual world."

"How are they going to do that?"

"They are preparing another virtual act of parliament to be brought in by the end of the year: No citizen will be able to participate in the state unless he or she, it, or they - you know what I mean - agree to become a virtual citizen."

"Are they still on about that nonsense?"

"No, they don't need another referendum; they are just going to pass a law saying that anyone outside the virtual world can be fined, or imprisoned, if they don't have a virtual profile on line."

"So, Mag the Monster has got her way has she. She is going to make it a crime if you are not a virtual citizen."

“Yes, it is dreadful Stan what are we going to do?”

“Well, for a start Mary we will need to get you out of that virtual government office.”

“I resigned today.”

“Mary you are the apple of my eye.”

“And you Stan, as you know, are my porridge first thing in the morning. But how are we going to survive living in a virtual state?”

“We will live in the real world, Mary.”

“Would you like to order now sir?”

9

At school on Monday morning, along with all the other children, Stan's daughter Sarah was staring at the teacher Sally Smiles.

"Now children when you become a virtual creature, you will feel so wonderful because you will be transformed into a digital dreamland. You will soon understand my little ones there is no gender, no rules on what you can, or cannot, be in the virtual world. The only thing you must remember children, when you are a virtual creature, living in a virtual world, you cannot

object to anything that is virtual. Once you agree to that you can be anything you want to be in the virtual world. Just think of it. Don't you think that is so cool!"

Just by looking at the faces through the class room window, Mary could see the kids were fed up listening to what the teacher was saying to them. Still, the class would be over in ten minutes, and they would all be away from Sally Smiles, or as most people called her Virtual Sal.

Like all the parents standing there in the playground, Mary could understand the reason why the little ones looked so sad. Who would not be if they were getting bombarded with virtual nonsense all day from the virtual guru.

Sally was very good at this kind of thing. She had of course her own website where she taught other children after school hours. *Sally will prepare you on how to live a full virtual life*, was the heading on her website. Yes, the Bitcoins were rolling in from all over the world. Sally was definitely on a roll.

That evening at home Stan's daughter reported more worrying news to her parents: "The virtual party are sending their virtual

representatives to our school next week to guide us on sex."

"What were they saying to you today, Sarah?" asked her mother with a worried frown on her face.

"They showed us naked cartoons, but we all got bored with them. They were not very funny."

In fact, it was reported to the head that same day, by the teacher that the children rebelled at this lesson; for they started singing their favourite song again: "We hate Mag the Monster. She's not very nice. She is like a robot and tell us lots of lies. We hate Mag the Monster…"

The kids had learned this song of course from their parents. There were many other songs about the first virtual numpty who was running the government, colleges, schools and civic institutions at this time. However, this one they sang was the best known.

Apparently, when Sally Smiles heard the kids were apathetic about what she was saying she was enraged. She sent for the head teacher. Sally that morning had to be calmed down with a large Cafe Latte, before going back into the classroom.

“Don’t they understand everything is virtual now. What is wrong with these kids today?” she wailed at other teachers at the first tea break.

In preparation for the sex lessons next week their daughter Sarah had been given a booklet full of explicit cartoons to take home with her. She was instructed to show her parents this. All the children were told to show this to whoever they lived with at home.

This was confirmed when little Sarah said to her mother: “We were told today that we have to show you this, by our teacher,” and she went into her school bag and handed the pamphlet over.

“What did she say to you, dear?”

“She told us to read it.”

“Did you do that?”

“No.”

“What are your friends saying about this?” asked mum.

“My friend Elizabeth told the teacher she likes to pee in plant pots.”

On hearing this, Stan the Man laughed so loud the whole house shook.

Sitting together in the living room, Mary was taken aback how innocent her daughter looked. Sarah was dreaming away looking out of the

window. Her parents could see how innocent she was in a strange way protected from state coercion by something beyond her. In her dreams and fancies the child had abstracted herself from the evil time around her. The book she had been given was far too explicit for a young child to look at. "All children are innocent," said Mary to herself as she shook her head.

The book titled *Virtual Relations* was duly thrown into the bin by Stan the Man. "You have a lovely childhood my dear. Don't you listen to those numpties at school. When you grow older you will understand all about the birds and bees," he told her.

"I like the birds and the bees," cried little Sarah, as she looked out of the window to see if she could see any.

Mary got up of her comfy chair by the fireplace wiped a tear, then took her daughter's hand and said: "Come on madam, help me with the washing up," and away they went together into the kitchen.

Stan, who was getting ready to go out tonight on an outreach with the White church, smiled and waved a friendly hand over at them. He did this as if they were about to board a train to a

faraway city like London or Paris: “Remember Sarah your prayers tonight, before you go to dreamland.”

“Yes, I will daddy.”

Even in a time when the nation was being controlled by the tech giants, in the house where Stan and Mary lived they were always happy; joy, laughter and singing reflected this. The feeling of love and security was always there when they were together, and they had such good fun too.

It was worrying though what they were doing with the young ones now that the virtual party was in power. Both Stan and Mary knew the Virtual party were controlling people’s minds using the virtual world to do that. Big tech giants and rogue states were no doubt involved in this as well.

Sad, but true, many citizens were now walking about controlled by the device they were holding. You could see just by looking at the young ones the Virtual party was trying to capture children’s minds as early as they could by putting social, political, ideas into them at a very young age. All sorts of nonsense at such a young age was being thrown at them. No wonder the young hated Mag the Monster.

It was a strange time now that the Virtual party were on the go; everything was accepted in life under the sun. Everything was permissible as long as it was consensual, and everything was consensual, they were told, if it was online for you had agreed to it.

The majority of citizens did not complain or protest about anything, anymore; they were frightened that they would be exposed as being involved in a hate crime if they flagged up what they thought was wrong. Consequently, everything went on, but you could not talk about everything; this was the great dilemma of the virtual era.

Such was the state of things in the virtual world where Stan and Mary lived. In this once great country that had prided itself of free speech love, peace and friendship, the Virtual party were controlling the nation by fear and virtual illusions.

The fear for the citizen was of living outside the virtual world. You really had to watch what you said these days. Speaking your mind could get you imprisoned. In fact, the Virtual party, if anyone did complain, boasted that most countries all over the world now promoted virtual living. Shutting down protesters was a sign that there

was no free speech anymore. This was enforced by nefarious legislation making people believe everything spoken was a possible hate crime.

The Virtual party, however, left it until secondary school until they opened up the real virtual nonsense: snuff videos, murder videos, along with all human activity played out online. After a year or two of this no one had any understanding of what was decent anymore.

What went on now in the virtual world ranged from the sublime to the obscene. Of course, many citizens watched explicit material and knew how to avoid the bad stuff, or deal with it without being controlled by it.

Many were sceptical though about the virtual world that had come upon them, and when told to embrace it they sought ways on how not to do that. Those who searched for a way out of the virtual prison, as they saw it, looked towards writers to help them. This is where Stan the Man came in. He was a great writer and wrote about real life and how love and peace could only come through the cross.

Preparing the virtual student for a virtual life was indeed a priority for the Virtual party of course. It went something like this: as long as you

do whatever you do in a nice manner, then that will be acceptable. So long as you do not get angry and upset and go about shouting about things going on in the virtual world you will not be asked to appear at the virtual court.

Everything that is virtual is permitted, is what they said in their press releases to the public and those in academia. The VP party always maintained you were quite safe if you stayed inside the virtual world. Of course, that was not true, for many people committed crimes in the virtual world, but this was hardly ever mentioned by those who ran the Virtual party.

What the Virtual party maintained was that the real world was a strange place to live in, and not only that it was dangerous for its citizens to live there. That is why they directed people to live their lives in complete control of the Virtual party inside a virtual world that had been constructed for them.

And many people did just that: "If you cannot beat them join them," was what the digital heads were saying these days.

It was noticed, not just by those in the White church, that most virtual people found it hard to strike up a conversation with people in the real

world, that they had never met before. Living their life in the virtual world was easy for them; for they did not have this problem. Everyone there was the same: virtual.

As has been said although the majority of citizens were in the complete control of the VP party, there were many citizens who were sceptical about the virtual world.

The Virtual party tried to control others by technology in the virtual world, but some had learned how to free themselves from that. Switching off all electronic devices was the norm these days for those who were sceptical who wanted to live their lives in the real world. Covering up flat screens helped too, and only using computers when you had to.

Certainly Stan the Man and his wife Mary were seen as outcast, freaks or even deviants by the new virtual beings. Real life adventures were rarely spoken about in public anymore in fear of offending the people who ran the country. The virtual numpties, as they were called by many people in the year of the virtual parliament.

Not many folks worked in an office now, but the ones that did - who were active there and were not virtual beings - always had to check out

who was who before speaking to them about real life adventures.

It had got to the stage that virtual people could not make friends with those in the real world anymore. They only knew virtual methods with their partners, that ranged from making love to chatting to them online about mundane things like the weather, websites, and places they liked or wanted to visit.

White church members had noticed that if a person was not interested in the real world, the relationship would end before it began. Fear of real life was a real problem for those virtual creatures who lived most of the day on the Internet inside the virtual world.

It was not all bad news these days though. Most of the youngsters at school like little Sarah knew the Virtual party, and the numpties that followed them, were not living in the real world. Therefore, what appeared in the virtual world at school was not of any interest to many of the youngsters.

All the children since the beginning of virtual state education couldn't wait until the end of the lessons so that they could go out into the real world and have fun. The country fields, the

flowers, chasing your friends round tall trees, these were the things little Sarah and her friends loved to do.

The young in the White church knew instinctively about real life from their parents and they were keen to be like them and enjoy life together. Sitting staring into a tablet or computer, like a virtual numpty, was not for them. They had great fun in Sarah's class, every morning, everyone booed and hissed when the face of Mag the Monster came on their computer screen.

"Good morning to you all, my little ones. This is your Virtual leader speaking. I am sure you are looking forward to your virtual lessons today. Your teacher Sally will help you learn all about the virtual world. We are a virtual nation and you are very much apart of it. The virtual world welcomes all sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity," and on and on she went like some alien being, which of course she was.

11

It was so odd how things had changed. Every day citizens visited Internet forums - it was the way it was - virtual people were always chatting about what they had seen and what they were up to in the virtual world. For a reserved society like Scotia it was extraordinary, the vast majority of citizens gave away their whole lives online to perfect strangers.

This was ignored by those in the know though; for they knew information was controlled by the tech giants, billionaires, and strange

agencies who attached themselves to the virtual governments around the world. It was well known by those in the know that the information given out online would be used in some way against those in the virtual state at some time in the future.

The Internet was where the virtual state monitored its citizens. People who chatted away innocently not knowing they were being monitored gave away the most precious things to others: date of birth, sexual activity, where they planned to go that day, and most dangerous thing of all their thoughts about the virtual state.

Stan and Mary had set up the White church after word got out that citizens were being monitored by spy agencies at home and abroad. After that they did not get involved in such things as social media or blogging. White church members had no interest in the virtual world.

The White church made it known from the outset they had no interest in these kinds of things. They adhered to the confession of faith of their nation that went all the way back to 1560. Of course, like many others at this time in life, they had to use the Internet to seek information,

or apply, or respond to a government request, but other than that they kept well away from it.

Every night at six thirty the White church members met at a secret location. There together they prayed to avoid the evil spirit within the nation where they were living.

One hour before the service, messages would be left on trees about where the meeting was to take place. All the members of the White church knew at this time that the virtual government was against religion and they were keeping an eye on them.

On the other hand, the virtual government allowed state churches to survive by propping them up, giving them grants and other sweeteners. The virtual state even gave finance to open commercial enterprises like cafe bars or restaurants within them. As long as the citizen kowtowed and aped the virtual world they would be left alone. Needless to say, they were hostile to believers of the White church.

So once again this week at the anointed hour the small group from the White church left their homes to meet and pray. This time it was in the upper room above the bakers shop. Their friend there who owned said premises at the far end of

what is known as the royal mile. The owner had in advance prepared a place for them.

It was always a secret where they would meet until the last moment; for as has been said all independent churches were quickly shutdown by the virtual state as soon as they got knowledge of them.

The way to tell a virtual church was of course in the Spirit. If you got to the end of the service and wondered when the service was going to start that was a sure sign it was a virtual church.

They could decorate the building to the hilt with all sorts of paraphernalia, but that did not convince members of the White church. The minister may be dressed in fine robes and his sermon full of erudite words. That would make no difference to believers though. They could see through all of that.

As Stan and Mary walked along the capital streets to the bakers shop where the service was on tonight, they were stopped by an irate woman.

She obviously knew who he was: "Tell me preacher do you agree with what they are doing with the school kids these days?" she asked as they were about to turn on to Doddle Street.

Even before he had time to answer her question, she added emphatically: "Are you listening to me Stan the Man. They are trying to change our children into virtual creatures."

"I know that madam. You are quite right in what you say. They are really going hard at it in the schools these days to indoctrinate our little ones into becoming virtual creatures."

"And what are you going to do about it, then?" she asked him firmly.

"Yes, we need to take action. You are quite right," he told her again, in a serious tone and, as he looked at her trying to remember who she was, he added. "It has gone too far."

"It certainly has."

"Give me some good news preacher."

"Yes, I have a surprise for you. I am going on the radio next week with my new book called *Wild Flowers and Weak Men*. This will be a good opportunity for me to announce that the reformation has begun and is underway."

"Thank goodness someone is standing up for our nation. Most of the men today have been feminised by Mag the Monster. Good for you Stan the Man. You can do it. We must protect the little ones from the virtual numpties. I will let all

the people know that the reformation is on its way."

"Oh, there is no use in getting arrested protesting against their reforms that are coming out. Remember my dear, it is a spiritual battle that is taking place."

The woman on the street seemed happy with what he had told her, and as they walked on Stan turned to Mary and whispered: "this next era will not be a good one. We will have to move away from our house to avoid being monitored by the virtual people. It will take a while before the virtual state is defeated. However, it will be defeated - of that there is no doubt."

As ever Mary knew Stan was right and she was ready to go with him to wherever he suggested. "Yes, I understand Stan," she said taking his arm. "We will need to start a new life somewhere. But where should we go to do that? If we are caught they will take little Sarah away from us and indoctrinate her into ways of the virtual world."

Mary knew her man could take on the virtual state, but she also knew there would be trouble ahead. They were doing the right thing though and she was happy at that.

Stan was upbeat too: “I cannot wait to tell people at the meeting tonight that the reformation has begun. It is wonderful news. Yes, my dear, the battle has begun. I will destroy the virtual world. However, for that to happen, I will have to go abroad. There is an evil spirit here in this nation. The curse will be here until it is lifted. Fear not, my dear, I will return when the dark clouds have passed, then we will reform our nation again.”

“Are you really going abroad,” Mary asked in a resigned tone.

“Mary you will be fine here. I will find you a place in the country. Your sister Martha and you can protect little Sarah. Keep her off school as much as you can. I will find a place for you to live in the country. No one will know who you are. There you can educate little Sarah in the home away from Mag the Monster and her virtual numpties.”

“Yes, Stan I can do that,” said Mary with tears in her eyes.

“The country has become totally secular and with the virtual police now encroaching on everyone, it is too dangerous to be a writer here in our homeland. That is why, I am going abroad. ”

Although Mary was shocked by what he said she did not react. She accepted this. Mary was faithful as the day was long. On many other occasion she had learnt not to react angrily to events. Even the time when her sister had not contacted her after she had been arrested for protesting against the virtual people. This was when Martha lived in Hadda's Tun. Stan knew Mary always remained calm when danger was around.

"Where will you go to, Stan?"

"There is a safe place in Geneva, I know. Members of White church are there. The community I am told live there without technology. They will look after me."

"Oh Stan," she sighed and took his hand: "You are a good man, Stan."

"I will come back Mary and claim Christ's kingdom here in Scotia once again. The virtual people may have taken over the official church - everyone knows that, and that they are teaching New Age religion everywhere throughout this land. The only thing that remains is for us to do is bring about a Reformation - the church must be reformed."

"How will you do that Stan?"

"I plan to release my book, *Wild Flowers and Weak Men.* This will tell the nation where things went wrong and the album called *Sons of the Reformation* will be played everywhere and that will be the songs for those who like us have had to fight for the true faith. As you know men have been feminised and can no longer think like men. We are indeed living in a time of weak men and wild flowers.

When I am interviewed, I will signal the start of the new reformation; this will bring people back to faith. The book and the album will be released to the public when I am abroad. Both projects will enlighten people about the state and how it has drifted from the old covenant, the Confession of Faith, into a virtual vacuum. Just like it was way back then, they will be asked to repent."

"What has happened to our great country, Stan."

"I am afraid it has been taken over by virtual people. Everyone knows that."

"It's terrible."

"Yes dear, the country has been seduced by alien forces. Most people are now living in a virtual world where truth is subject to virtual

computers run by algorithms. Nothing is real anymore."

"Citizens feel the only way to live is to become part of the virtual world that has been forced upon them. Those who dare to seek the truth are hounded by artificial intelligence. New technology is used by clever technocrats every day to oppress their senses."

"Oh Stan the people are asleep."

"Yes, the majority of people are oblivious to any threat from those virtual agencies who operate hidden in the dark. The nation has been completely sanitised. They have become polite and obey every directive from their masters in the Virtual party. They think this will go well for them in the world they live in."

"It is unbelievable Stan."

"As you know, citizens reveal everything about themselves these days online as if to conform to the virtual state. The Virtual party are good at deceiving humans. They are always saying to the electorate: 'you have nothing to hide, you can reveal anything you like on line."

"We are living in a dreadful time."

"Due to this the virtual state know everything about everyone. 'And with that the majority of

citizens are captured by insidious programs. People who live on the Internet are seduced easily. In some cases they get them to submit themselves to their own images, and before they know it they have become part of the virtual world. Thereafter, like other virtual people they make up their own image, some even have their own avatar. What happens is from that point they cease to embrace and engage with real people in the real world. The life they live is unreal."

"Oh it is dreadful Stan. How can we save our nation from Mag the Monster and her virtual numpties?"

And with all that said, Stan moved closer to his wife and he kissed her. "Reformation, my dear - that is the word."

"I will pray for that Stan."

There was no secret about what was happening in the country: humans were being hypnotised by digital images. It was not just in the land of Scotia that this was happening - it was happening all over the world. All you had to do was open your eyes and you could see everywhere you looked people were walking about staring into their devices being controlled by the digital images within them.

Due to this alien culture many citizens could no longer interact with each other. As soon as their eyes looked at the screen, they become virtual and joined in with all other virtual creatures wherever they found them online.

It was common knowledge most citizens were now detached from reality. From the point of contact with the virtual world nothing to them seemed to be real anymore; the virtual spell they were under was very alluring indeed. It was well known that once you had been capture by the virtual world it was hard to escape it.

Stan said as much to his better half: “Yes, Mary, after a citizen has been lured inside the digital arena, it is very difficult for them to join the real world again.”

“They need help Stan.”

“Indeed, they do.”

12

Like all his friends in the White church, Stan followed a routine to keep himself away from being captured by the virtual agents who scanned every day for victims. He only used the Internet when it was necessary. Stan was in and out like a shot: sending an email, or checking a fact, getting directions, buying an item, or downloading a book. He only purchased things online when he could not buy them in the real world. Many citizens did this now. Nowadays, he went to a

library and used a computer there. It was a made up account, of course. The name he went under was Jan Huss. Many citizens had fake accounts like this.

"Lest we forget Mary, it all happened when the virtual people started to interact with each other on the Internet. And from that point on they became isolated from the real world and excluded themselves from those who would not join them there. That is why today the virtual people ignore real people around them."

"You are right in what you say Stan. People have been hypnotised and that is why they are living virtual lives."

"Please don't worry Mary, help is at hand. After the reformation we will get them out of the fantasy world they are living in and into the real world of love, peace and friendship. It is only then that they will worship the Good Lord. You cannot be saved unless your reject the virtual world."

"You can save them, Stan,"

"Well, to help them do that, we must bring an end to the virtual parliament, and ask the people of our nation to repent and embrace the truth."

"Your book will do it, Stan; I am sure of that."

“Yes, you are right Mary. Everyone who reads it will understand how to escape the virtual world.”

“But what about those poor souls who reject the truth?”

“Yes, I am afraid Mary, in many cases some are too far gone. It may be difficult for them to live outside the virtual world now that they have been virtualised. They are in such an hypnotic state that they have become aliens to what is real in life.”

“Oh, it’s dreadful Stan.”

It was true what he was saying. In the land of Scotia during this time of the virtual parliament, many in the state were in despair and in desperate need of help. It was not their fault. The elite corporations were forever frightening them by the things they were posting on line.

The Virtual party, who were running the country, when they heard about things said against the parliament instructed the virtual police to arrest those right away who were protesting. The term right wing was always used against everyone these days, and the charge against them was either fear or alarm, hate speech or cyber crime. You could not protest

about anything in the days of the Virtual party. Everything the citizen said could be illegal under some woke law or rule.

The parliament always had plans ongoing to control their virtual citizens. The digital currency was not up and running yet. However, it was well known that there was a proposal to bring it in and abolish cash. They thought that a government backed by a digital currency would make it easier for the virtual parliament to pull the plug on dissidents - there were still a few around - if they continued to protest. Using their digital currency they could track their movements and haul them in whenever they liked.

Due to this oppression there was no threat at the moment to those who ran the virtual parliament being overthrown. In any case the rulers, who they said ran the country - the global elite - lived outside the Internet in faraway lands. They were not captured by the methods of any virtual parliament. The tech barons, as they were known, liked to enforce their virtual laws on the people via their virtual representatives. Their digital voices from afar were certainly scaring most of the population into silence.

As for the spooks, who worked in the shadows, virtual reality was everything they ever wanted. After all, this was an age of virtual darkness. People had not only lost control of their democracies; many had lost control of their own history, community and families too.

In short, most citizens were now living in a virtual universe where they were encouraged to only interact with other virtual creatures. Real life was something they had to forget about or reject. There was no history for them to be part of. Hence the destruction of the democratic society.

Many artists tried to help people survive this Gehenna. Stan's folk songs were very popular. They were listened to by young and old alike. He really engaged with people of all ages; for many were seeking a way out of the nightmare virtual world that had all of a sudden come upon them. His songs told stories about real life outside of the virtual world.

The majority of people did not tell others about what they were listening to; for fear of being interfered with by the virtual state. Stan always made fun of the virtual numpties, as he called them, whenever he got the chance.

For many years now, Stan and Mary had been part of the White church. They were one of the few churches who had not been infiltrated by the state. The reason for that was the way they had structured themselves in such a way as to spot adversaries right away.

At short notice the members went onto the streets of Dùn Èideann to save people from the virtual spooks who everyone knew operated day and night on the Internet. It was dangerous work. It was well known that virtual people had infiltrated the official church in the land of Scotia.

Virtual people had over the years brought a lot of false teachings into the national church before they setup the virtual parliament. However, now that church and state were operating as one, it was getting too dangerous to get involved with either of them.

The whole parliament was now in effect controlling society in a virtual way, and the organised official church was going along with them like a hand does inside a glove.

Churches outside the state like the White church, at this time had no influence with the members of parliament. It was well known that

any petitions sent to the virtual party were ignored.

What usually happened was the citizen got an email from the parliament confirming what they had sent, then after that everything went quiet. Pursuing a virtual member of the parliament was dangerous; for there was so much legislation on the statute books they could get citizens on: harassment, stalking, hate speech, fear or alarm, anti social behaviour.

Please leave a comment on the comments page they would say and if you dared complain to them again, and were still not happy about something after that they got you arrested. This is how the virtual people reacted to criticism. Like all virtual people it was simply daft to try to engage with them.

Even though citizens distrusted both church and state they knew they were controlled by them. Free thinkers though like Stan the Man, tried to help others. When he met an unhappy citizen on the street he would always tell them his favourite joke. “It is not as bad as you think it is - it is worse. Come and join the White church. We are the people of the book.”

He told them to look for themselves at the Bible. The state church hardly mentioned the Bible; it was mainly a question and answer service now in their churches with a virtual representative.

Churches were getting emptier and emptier by the day now that the state was in full virtual mode controlling them. It was like an alien from a faraway planet mesmerising parishioners with false doctrines from the Internet. People were indeed worried, and many were scared and traumatised by what was happening that they no longer stepped inside their local church, or any civic building, for that matter.

13

At the end of another busy week once again the streets of Dùn Èideann were busy with tourists and local guides going here and there about their business.

At the far end of the Royal Mile, as it was still called, in amongst the crowd was Stan and Mary heading for another night out. Just passed the great monument of a fantasist who lived in the post enlightenment era, they walked hand in hand on their way to their favourite restaurant once again.

As ever en route, they would hand out tracts and speak with people who they thought needed an encouraging word. Of course, the virtual police had their eye on them. Thus far they had not moved in on Stan to arrest him. The virtual cops knew he was liked by the people in the capital and, like all those who work in the shadows, they were binding their time when to move to jump on him.

They wanted to shutdown the White church all together, but thus far they had not penetrated it. The simple reason for that was the White church could tell who was a believer and who was a phoney, in the days of the virtual parliament.

"Some good news ladies," said Stan to a passing group of revellers, who he could see were themselves heading for a night on the town. "Why not read the tract," he said holding it out to them, "The Reformation is coming," he prophesied, as he pointed at the heading.

"Reformation? asked the blonde lady, dressed in designer gear: "What's that all aboot," she said in a broad Glaschu accent while looking at her friend.

"The church has fallen into the hands of the state, and the secularists are deceiving the people

left right and centre," Stan told them "We are here ladies to show you the right path. You are in good hands."

The ladies may have been living the high life tonight, but they could see this man was genuine and moreover what he was saying was true. Even though they were out for a good old time on the town, they could see Stan the Man was no doomsayer.

At this time when the nation was being controlled by the virtual parliament, there were many sects promoting the apocalypse. Stan was not one of them. He was always upbeat, and good fun to be with. He never proclaimed the End Times the way other preachers did.

"They may have your data ladies, but they don't have your soul," he joked with them.

It was well known even to unbelievers that the established church had fallen into secular hands. Stan thought he had better have a word with the ladies: "They have become a valley of dry bones. Their churches are full of virtual spies these days. Some now see religion as a spectator sport for the virtual people to enjoy. They beam their services onto computers and handheld devices, and the

numpties from wherever all gaze in wonder. Do not despair. Help is near at hand."

"What should we do?" they both asked him

"All you need to do ladies is read the Good Book to escape them."

The matriarchs all laughed at this. However, they knew it was true that the house of God had been infiltrated by virtual people.

The blonde lady, who Stan had initially engaged, smiled at Mary before agreeing with her husband: "I know the church near where I live has got a cafe bar, and they serve coffee and cakes at the same time as the service is going on. They say it is funny when the faithful are praying and someone shouts out during the service: 'It was a cappuccino I wanted - not a latte!' I have never been myself to a New Age service..."

Her friend bent forward to get her tuppence worth in: "I would like a cappuccino with chocolate. Come on, let's go. Leave the preacher to get on with his work."

Stan the Man nodded to confirm what the score was. Then he told the matriarchs before they departed not to despair: "The reformation is coming ladies," he proclaimed confidently. "Our church here in Scotia will not be complicit with

the state. We do not promote the ways of the world," he then quoted in opposition to those promoting the End Times on the street: "Look up the kingdom is coming."

The track he left then with read:

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. Exodus 12:13-15

14

This message of Reformation given out by Stan the Man went round the capital like wild fire. Soon all the nation knew about the Covenanter and his campaign that he was going to save the land of Scotia from the virtual people. It was no great surprise, and it soon became apparent from reports in the virtual blogs that Stan was hated by Mag the Monster, and that she was out to get him. Yes, there was going to be a reckoning soon, there was no doubt about that.

Even the children in schools who did not know anything about what was going on in the virtual country were always singing the song: "We love Stan the Man. We hate Mag the Monster."

Of course, they had heard about this from their parents and guardians at home. It was not reported though in the virtual press, but many young people were turning away from the virtual world and were suspicious of the virtual state. It was a time when everything went on, but citizens could not criticise anything for fear of being accused of causing fear or alarm. Like all generations before them, the young had found their voice. The new wine would not be snuffed out. Their voices were active within their own circles away from the virtual state.

Although Stan was a jovial sort of chap, he knew this was a dangerous era and not to stay too long on the street and talk with people. He knew the virtual police were monitoring him and would be looking for his image on the street cameras night and day. They had powerful microphones too that could home in on a citizen's voice from three blocs away.

Of course, the authorities had been tracking Stan with all the tools they had at their disposal

for quite some time now. This was in preparation to expose him as a right wing activist. Anyone within the community who spoke out about what was going on was quickly fingered by someone in the liberal elite, and they soon found themselves taken to court. The usual tactics were in play.

After all, everyone knew Mag the Monster was in charge of the security for the nation, and everyone knew she was behind all the plots against those who would not succumb to the virtual world.

The latest press report released just the other day, that went through a government source, tried to draw Stan into their net:

Stan the man the hipster poet of the capital, as he is known, is at it again. You will see from the photograph here on the Internet, Stan is not so liberal as he claims. The well known poet known for his apocalyptic preaching is now hanging out at the Jewish peace stall in town chatting with the right wing party leader there Victor Snell.

However, the press campaign against him was not going to plan. Those who knew Stan the Man knew what he was all about, and those that did

not know him personally, when they came across his titles were interested in his books and music rather than what was being said about him online.

So, after much consideration with her advisors, Mag the Monster sent for her two best detectives: Fusby and Lance. When they appeared in front of her office, she wasted no time in telling them what they had to do: "Deliver the street preacher into the hands of the virtual court. That is your instructions gentlemen. If he escapes abroad, go after him, and see to it he does not return," her bitter tone left no room for doubt what she meant by that.

The two virtual detectives had come to her attention last year during the Stephen Deacon affair. Indeed, it was Fusby and Lance who helped bring him to trial on a trumped up charge for trying to blackmail a lawyer working for the virtual state. Thereafter, she always spoke highly of the two officers. Naturally, they in turn spoke highly of their leader too. In fact, in the office where they worked every morning they gave a personal allegiance to her and received a thumbs up for doing so by their colleagues.

Consequently, their praise was sung all over social media by those who promoted the virtual

state. There was no doubt about it after reading their exploits online no one in their right mind could think that they could ever be able to escape the two great virtual detectives Fusby and Lance. The virtual leader had a huge following too. Men who had been feminised, saw Mag the Monster as the new strong woman of the time. Indeed, how dare she be challenged by the hipster poet who wrote comic songs and shorts stories.

However, the term woman when applied to Mag the Monster was something she did not like. She saw herself as a hermaphrodite, equal if not better than any man or woman.

15

The sale of their house went threw without a hitch. Thankfully, Stan the Man and his family had enough savings now from this to get away from the virtual state and tech giants who were controlling the nation.

One of the preventative measures they took was that they used cash all the time. Thankfully, cash had not been withdrawn yet in the virtual state. It was always an issue for the state on how and where it should be used. The virtual

government knew that if the Internet was shutdown by a foreign adversary they could flood the country with cash for people to trade. Hence the reason at the outset of the virtual state the digital currency was not the dominant force they thought it would, or should be within the virtual playground.

As they walked away from the happy group of matriarchs, Stan put his hand across his mouth, and whispered to Mary: "If they arrest me, take Sarah to Martha's house next week and avoid being taken to one of those camps to learn all about being a good virtual citizen."

"What if Martha is not at home?"

"If she is not at home, then take her over to Glasgow to the White church there."

Mary knew Stan was right and she gently nodded. It was a good idea; for there were many agencies set up now to recondition citizens on how to live a good virtual life these days. It was not only the children who were indoctrinated by the state. Adults were under threat too.

The state dominated all sorts of virtual activities these days. This happened at universities, and in the work place. All of course funded by the virtual party through taxpayers

money. There were agencies - newly setup - hungry to take children away as early as they could from their parents to indoctrinate them into the ways of the virtual world.

No wonder parents were worried about their offspring. Not only that, they were worried about themselves too; for reports where abound from those camps that men had to wear women's clothes, carry handbags, wear lipstick and make up, and that was just for starters. Virtual women filmed each other non stop all day in their camps to be perfect virtual models.

Like every one else in the White church, Stan knew that his family were under threat now. Even more so due to the fact that he had called out Mag the Monster on the streets of the capital in the land of Scotia. He knew the virtual police were monitoring him and would try to arrest him.

Next week after he did his interview on virtual radio, he thought that it looked the likely time for this to happen. Yes, as soon as he proclaimed the Reformation had started, he knew, they would come after him.

It went without saying the Virtual party wanted to end all religions in the world. Without success they tried to infiltrate the White church

when they first got wind of them, but they had not been successful. They soon found out White church members were aware of false relationships with so called fellow believers. There were other churches, of course, that invited them in willingly - that was fatal.

What happened was that not long after doing that the virtual agents started promoting their virtual ways. Having understanding of the teachings the believers left. With hardly anyone left in the building, who had any understanding of religion, the spies would then shutdown the church and sell it for a profit. If they had plenty of land all the better for that ; for it could be sold off to the highest bidder.

The ones that remained became virtual churches needless to say due to the fact they were run by the virtual state. The White church members only looked to the Spirit in the bible to guide them throughout their lives. Mercifully, even living in the time of the virtual parliament, they knew they could worship anywhere.

The official state churches promoted everything and anything to get people involved with them. After all in the virtual world nothing existed. The numpties to condition citizens into

virtual creatures put forward the view of a virtual saviour that was not unlike what you saw in the movies.

After they had embraced everything that was going on inside society, citizens had two choices: either leave the state run church, or stay and become a virtual being. You will always be digitally welcomed inside a virtual church was how they put it on their websites. As the citizens knew, in the time of Mag the Monster, many virtual believers opened cafe bars and had them up and running while services were going on.

"Coffee?

"Yes, please could you make sure it has double shots and extremely hot water please..."

"What is going on over there?"

"Oh, they are having a church service."

"Is this a church? I thought this was a cafe."

"It is well, sort of church, you know..."

"Oh give me one of those lovely scones will you please. You know they make the best scones in the capital here..."

Stan often told this story to his friends after overhearing what was said inside state run churches when he was in Glaschu.

What was said about state run churches in public was that they married same sex couples, promoted transgender politics, as the kids danced with their virtual headsets on, and the public sat watching them having a coffee and something to eat.

It was well known that every lifestyle under the sun was accepted by the Virtual party, in the hope more would come and embrace a Virtual lifestyle. Why should the churches be any different from the state? they said to the virtual people.

What occurred in the last era had made Stan the Man stand firm against alien doctrines within the church. Everyone who met him on the street, or in company, could see that he was someone they could rely upon as to the scriptures.

Due to the persecution of believers in his homeland, Stan and Mary sold everything and now stayed with friends in and around the Dùn Èideann area. To remain safe it was wise for them to move from house to house every other night to avoid the virtual police. Sarah their lovely daughter loved doing this. The excitement of it all - well at least that was a bonus to her mother.

“We are hiding from Mag the Monster,” Sarah would often tell her friends at school. “The

virtual witch will not find us; for we have many friends in the land of Scotia."

It was such great fun for her and her friends to play and talk, and hide away, as she put it, from the wicked witch in the land of Scotia: "When you see a camera cover your face, or the evil witch may send her numpties after you. Look there is a little one there to be captured…" Sarah would often cry to friends, "Run the numpties are coming!"

Stan and Mary planned to move around this way until they could find somewhere to hide their child in the country, far from the reach of the virtual people.

Mercifully, the White church had set up a network of free thinkers in and around Edinburgh. This helped Stan and Mary no end. In fact, this network stretched all the way from the east coast to the west on the other side of Scotia.

There was one place on the west coast of Glaschu that interested Stan. That was the village called Eglischane; it lay eight miles on the south side from the city. He knew that many people escaped there from the virtual police. Some

however were not so lucky and had been caught and had been put in what they call a digital jail.

As is the way of the virtual state, morning, noon and night they were lectured about the virtual world by social workers from other areas in the land.

What was known was that in the virtual jail they had an hour each day to communicate with other virtual prisoners throughout the land. Their conversations were monitored all the time. This was nothing unusual at this time during the virtual parliament. There were prisoners from all around the world in the same situation.

At night in the V room, as they called it, they slept surrounded by the Judas eye - a virtual camera in their cell - as the prisoners called it. This was a large black bulb in their cell. Many took their own lives due to mental health problems.

These days even at home it was difficult not to be monitored by the state, no matter where you were. The Virtual party had drones everywhere, and AI software to track citizens movements wherever they went. The burning question for every citizen, who had opted out of virtual living, was when will they move in and arrest me? Under

the new virtual empowerment act and legislation, the Virtual party had all the powers they needed to do this. This all happened after the introduction of the virtual act; it was now considered a crime to live outside the virtual world.

To protect themselves members of the White church communicated only by letter or note. "Paper and pen is the only way," is what they said to each other after prayers.

Like many others, the White church understood that everything digital was controlled by the Elite corporations in faraway lands, and not only that it could be compromised at any time. It was certainly not safe to use email, or even use a mobile or landline phone anymore.

Mary knew that once Stan went abroad there would be a heightened presence on what she was doing. However, she readied herself for this by hardening herself against comfortable living and pleasure related to sedentary life. Little Sarah was brave too. She never complained where they eat or where they slept now.

Not that long ago when Stan set up a prayer group, he told his friends in the White church that this was the only way you could escape from

interference from the virtual state: “And even when you are abroad use paper and pen,” was what he always told his friends.

The group relied upon Stan the Man to keep them right on how to communicate with each other no matter where they were. Mary knew that her sister Martha would have to step into the breach when Stan was away abroad.

17

In planning his escape, Stan knew that he would have to pass on secret information, via the network they had, to members of the White church on how to avoid the clutches of the virtual police. Stan knew all about surveillance; for many members in the church had worked in information technology. They passed what they knew on to him, how the virtual state tried to control citizens.

It was so dangerous these days; for there were not only cameras everywhere, but many Straw

men, and snitchers in society were ready to inform on their neighbours. If you were a member of the White church you were most definitely an interest to the virtual police.

Even those who did not know Stan the Man personally, knew from his writings that he believed what he was doing was right. They could see he trusted in God, and tried to help others wherever he could.

To prevent exposing fellow members of the church, Stan would always change the venue for prayer meetings at the last minute to a secret rendezvous so that the state would not be able to listen in by planting their microphones in the buildings where the service was going to take place. Thus far, due to his diligence no one from his group in the White church had been arrested.

It was a strange world now; the government were completely unaccountable. This was due to the nation becoming Godless. The majority of people had become alien to the creator and his Word. This is what Stan was always preaching to them in their houses, even on the street.

"The Virtual people are lost," he told anyone who would listen, "They have no history or intercession with the creator to help them; for

they are bamboozled by the digital images on their devices."

As they sat down once more inside their favourite restaurant, The Olive Cafe, Mary said: "You are right Stan, people need to hear the Word of God," Mary was always there to encourage and help him and she knew it. "You go abroad and bring back the reformation. I will be all right here with Sarah."

Sitting there together in their favourite cafe bar in the capital, Stan looked at her as if no words could explain his feelings. He said tenderly: "Mary, there is a place in the country, I know where you can go to with Sarah. You should be safe there. It is a lovely part of the world, you can bring up our daughter there away from the reach of the Digital lords."

"Where is it, Stan?"

"It is on the other side of Glaschu; I will take you tomorrow. However, we must continue to ask friends to leave us a room for us every other night in and around the capital. This will not draw the attention of the virtual detectives, who as you know, are following us everywhere now. Then at the right moment, I will head abroad."

“I understand Stan, everyone is in danger these days from the virtual police. We will have to watch.”

“Thats right, Mary, it is too dangerous to signal any change in our movements. The money we have from the sale of the flat, I have moved into a private account through a friend in the White church. Your name is now on it. The countryside will be good for you and Sarah.”

“But what if they find us, Stan?”

“Well, if they do, when you get released escape from the virtual people again. Another friend in the White church will come forward and help you. There will always be a safe house ready for you to go to.”

“But how will little Sarah learn her lessons?”

“You can teach her. In the country you can buy her books. Little Sarah loves books. If you need to use the Internet, pick up a free signal and search for what you need through an encrypted browser.”

“Yes, I can do that,” sighed Mary, “At least we will be away from the reach of Mag the Monster and her virtual detectives.”

“That’s it Mary. You can teach Sarah the basics of education. She is doing well. In good

time she will learn the teachings. When the time comes, she will make her own way out into society. Soon she will grow; she will have all she needs. Warn her about the ways of the virtual world, and how to avoid becoming a virtual creature."

"Do you know the area in the country where we are going to?" asked his wife tenderly.

"Yes, it is where I used to go to when I was a boy. I heard through the grapevine there is an old empty container there next to the farm. The land is owned by a White church member. Not many people know about it. It is important that we escape the oppressive ways of the state by staying under the radar. It is a perfect spot. Their signals will not penetrate the container. You can stay there until the evil passes away from our country. And when the churches are reformed that will be a sign that everyone can go back out into society."

16

After many days and nights of working on his book, Stan the Man finished his latest novel, *Wild Flowers and Weak Men.* It was now on sale for download, and there were hard copies too under the counter in many stores in the capital, for those to read in the old fashioned way. He was also getting a lot of interest online too; for he had uploaded it to a free library site.

For a while now, Stan had been preparing for the interview in the capital with Virtual radio to talk about his new book. Mary knew this and did not disturb him. Stan liked to disappear to park

benches and country places to, as he put it: "Do some thinking."

Meanwhile, the title of his latest novel *Wild Flowers and Weak Men*, was causing a sensation; for even if someone had not read it they knew that men in the virtual world had been feminised and that this is what the book was about.

The central character in his book regained his manhood only by finding his male side again. It would only be once other men followed him would the virtual nation be overthrown; for they had feminised men to corrupt the state. With men inactive within the virtual state, this was the reason all sorts of nonsense had been brought into society.

Mary knew he was going to speak about this tomorrow night on the radio, and she put the date in her diary for posterity. Mary tried tonight to keep the conversation light as she could. After all, they had their meal to look forward to.

Up until this point, it was well known that the virtual world would not employ any man unless he was a feminist.

Stan knew what she was thinking and chatted away to her about how good it was to be in the White church during this time of virtual illusions.

Then with a smile, as they sat at their favourite table in the restaurant, Stan relaxed. He looked at her for a moment, then under his breath he told her: "After the interview we will escape to the countryside. We can hide out there in the container, until I go abroad."

It was a resistance style of activity for Stan the Man, much akin to the way the Free French had to do against the Nazis in the Second World War. However, today it was all about virtual surveillance. People knew their data was being hoovered up and accessed by anyone and everyone. They knew the virtual state had a file on every citizen. The majority had capitulated and had given in to their virtual demands.

However, every day people were looking for a way out of the virtual world and many were joining the White church. The White church was active everywhere now. They had a network of friends always ready to help those brave enough who wanted to ignore the agents of the virtual world.

Of course, due to modern technology, the virtual state run by Mag the Monster, and her cronies, could access people lives whenever they wanted to. Citizens were wary of this intrusion

and although they tried their best to switch off all electronic equipment, when they needed privacy, they knew they were being monitored everywhere they went.

The virtual detectives even tried to put smart dust on people to track them when they had no electronic equipment in the air so to speak. But the numbers of the White church were growing; citizens were turning away from the digital playground.

The members of the White church were from all walks of life, colours and creeds. They were brave souls who helped citizens escape the virtual isolation they had found themselves in. White church members were never down. You could always tell by looking at them they were happy souls. That was the thing said about them and they always made fun of life too. They always joked with others: "It is an evil world, but don't worry about it."

Just like in olden times, the White church members had secret signs. They carried this out with such fun too: one member would draw signs on a piece of paper and pass it to another. This is how they would pass love messages on to each

other. Marks were also placed on trees and walls for others to follow.

Everyone knew Mag the Monster's agents were everywhere trying to infiltrate them. Many White church members helped them escape from the virtual detectives by letting them stay the night at their place. Those who did not know their bibles of course soon drifted away. The Spirit between believers brought them together; they were assured of safety, help and friendship within this glorious union.

There was another advert that evening on state radio about the 'Mad Covenanter', as they now called him. Mary had caught it when she was in the supermarket; for there they played music nonstop from the virtual radio station, otherwise called Virtual FM:

"Exciting news listeners! Tomorrow we have the local author Stan the Man in the studio. Yes, the 'Mad Covenanter' will be talking about his new book: Wild Flowers and Weak Men. Don't miss it!"

She relayed what she had heard back to him; for many people in the capital had already got wind of this. Mary knew his book would cause an earthquake. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the programme too. It was obvious anyone who claimed that men today must be de feminised was in for a rough ride by the 'woke folk', on the radio as well as everywhere else in the virtual world.

"Yes, Stan the Man will be here to reveal to you how men can de feminise themselves. The book *Wild Flowers and Weak Men*, I believe is on sale this week," sang the cocky jock presenter in a sarcastic tone on Virtual Radio

Stan knew that they would not arrest him at the radio station, but they would wait and probably go for him sometime after that. This was the way the virtual cops acted: watching and listening to the digital chatter, always in the shadows ready to pounce.

Everyone knew the virtual agents working for them studied citizens online, and when they had the opportunity moved in thereafter.

It was well known that they also employed some mercenaries from abroad to do their dirty

work for them, like build a profile of their targets from their online activity. Although virtual evidence was accepted in the virtual court, in many cases it had been overturned due to AI. Counterfeit digital representations were everywhere now and it was hard to tell what was authentic and what had been conjured up by Artificial Intelligence.

The virtual courts knew it was more convincing if they had a real witness to take the stand and from there they could present incriminating against the accused, alongside the virtual evidence that had been gathered against them.

'Yes, I met the author at a book signing in the capital, and he was offensive to me. He told me that I had to de feminise myself if I wanted to become a real man. And not only that mi lord, he also tried to turn me against the virtual world and renounce our leader. Moreover, he said to me the most awful things about her and the virtual parliament. I was very upset indeed by what he said," was what one witness claimed recently in a fear or alarm case against a citizen.

Even though Stan carried no electronic devices on him, he knew how to avoid the virtual

detectives. Stan knew the likes of Fusby and Lance had been trained to operate in the real world, as well as in the virtual arena. At all times he watched out for hidden microphones, agents in bars and restaurants, cameras in cafes and public transport. Notwithstanding, Stan planned to be out of the country before they two infamous detectives got anywhere near him.

He told Mary as much that night after they had finished their meal: "When we get back to the digs tomorrow, we must prepare to move. I believe they will move in on us quite soon. Today a contact in the church informed me of this. He knows a friend who knows a virtual cop. Mary, I am sure after the interview on the radio they will make their move."

"Are you sure you will be safe inside the radio studio, Stan?"

"Oh, they won't risk to do anything there."

"Would you like coffee or some more white wine?" enquired the young blonde waitress from Poland.

Stan always communicated with students working abroad: "Dziękuję"

After the glasses were refilled, Mary looked sad, but she soon rallied: “Good luck Stan. You will make it through.”

27

And with that sentiment from his wife still ringing in his heart, on the appointed day, Stan set off for the virtual radio station in the capital city of Dùn Èideann.

At the end of the radio interview, the presenter Mr Jeremy Needle thought he would try and catch out Stan the Man: "Well Stan, now that you have finished your book and it is on sale, have you plans to write another one and if so what is the working title?"

“Excellent question Mr Needle!” laughed Stan, “My next book will be called, Reformation...”

Of course, the authorities were listening in on this and tracked Stan the Man as soon as he left the building. However, the house where Stan and his family were staying that night with friends was proving difficult for the virtual police to monitor and penetrate. Stan kept moving from one house to another, within the capital, in one door and out the other sometimes on the same street. When a team was dispatched to the area where they thought he was living, they always went to the wrong address.

It was comical for when the two virtual detectives, Fusby and Lance, turned up in their driverless white van and chapped the door, they got nowhere.

Even though he was frustrated, Fusby was always jolly: “Good afternoon my name is Mr Fusby. We are from the virtual police department. We have come to check on your Internet license. Can we come in?”

This is what they always said to strangers to gain entry to their homes. Most folks were

friendly enough until they heard that they wanted entry.

"We would like to look at your technical equipment that you are using. It is purely for safety of course against hackers and thieves."

Some friends of Stan sent the virtual cops fake messages to thrown them off his trail. Everyone knew their emails were intercepted these days by the virtual cops so you had to have your wits about you, and use a fake account when you were doing this kind of thing. Even surfing the web was dodgy.

The correct address they were staying at was only revealed to them by word of mouth at the last minute: "Go to the upper room tonight, and when you get there have a meal, sing a hymn, then leave for Mathew's place at the meadows and there you will be met by a friend."

The team assigned to monitor Stan and his family were from the virtual division, highly thought of and as has been recorded, they were the two celebrated middle aged detectives: Fusby and Lance. Whenever they picked up a voice signal of Stan, they would intercept it, pinpoint the location and hold it until they got there.

From their office, or from their van, Fusby and Lance would listen in to the chatter going on within the area. Of course, they kept an eye on emails and texts being sent about Stan the Man by those who knew him.

His friends in the White church were sometimes followed; for like Stan they used no electronic equipment. However, this never resulted in any evidence against them. In the main what they found out was mundane things: shopping for groceries, prayer requests, enquiries about other church members, services and intimations regarding births, marriages, and deaths.

Like all the other members of the White church, Stan used paper and pen to communicate with friends. Therefore, the virtual cops could not penetrate his missives.

After the radio show, Fusby got word that night from Mag the Monster. He was at home sitting with his wife when she phoned him. He was told in no uncertain terms to: "bring in the Covenanter" as he was called in their office.

Thereafter, right away he sought to identify where he was. Consequently, Fusby phoned Lance to see what he thought of the interview on

the radio, and then he updated his deputy about what the first virtual minister said to him on the phone. After the discussion, he confirmed the directive: “Lance, we have to bring him in - orders from the top.”

The two well known detectives got to work in earnest after the executive directive had been confirmed by email. Their instructions were: “Bring in the Covenanter and put him in a virtual cell. No real person is to speak with him until his trial,” was how the virtual leader put it to the head of the virtual police.

So, a plan to embroil their target out of hiding was drawn up that night on the phone between Fusby and Lance, so that they could arrest Stan the Man and bring him to the virtual criminal court by the end of the week. It was clear to them from those in power, the plan was to stop him agitating against the virtual state and incarcerate him in a virtual prison. No one would worry about him after the story got out saying that Stan the Man has been arrested for crimes against the virtual state. He would be just like many others after that completely forgotten about.

29

Finally, Stan got word that the container near the old farmhouse in the country was available. The farmer, whose folks came from that area and was himself from a Covenanting family, that went way back to the seventeenth century, knew the score. He like others knew that Mag was a monster and that the virtual world was where the evildoers operated these days. When the farmer heard about his plight, he was happy to help Stan the Man escape the virtual cops.

Not long after the farmer was contacted up at the farm a homing pigeon was sent to another friend down near the mill at the waterfall, and from there a message was passed on to another member of the White church nearby.

In the countryside where the farmer lived this was the way to escape the virtual police; for folks wanted to hide out of sight as much as the could these days from being tracked by electronic devices, surveillance drones and virtual agents. The farmer, like many others at this time, knew the virtual state had become a law unto itself; giving no appeal against any of its decisions, while controlling the passions of citizens by outpouring endless virtual illusions.

The following day at twelve noon, on the southside of Glaschu, Stan the Man met the Covenanting farmer not far from his farm. Just as his father did before him, Stan shook hands with him outside on the country road that led to the mill.

It was a long time since he had seen him. In fact, he had to go way back to the time when he was a boy when they all used to come here to this idyllic spot many years ago. The farmer was just like he remembered him. He was a tall well built

man, taciturn fellow, wary of friends and foe alike, hard to speak to, but resolute in mind.

As Stan looked around him, he could see that thankfully nothing much had changed in this area. His only observation was that it was more untidy now than before. The farmer stared at him as if the ground beneath the hunted man could swallow him up any minute.

Suddenly, he snorted, then looked across the fields to where the large container was half hid by bramble bushes and trees, opposite what historians thought was an ancient Norman mound.

"You can have it until you find another place," said the farmer in a long mundane tone.

In the same country accent as before, he then went on to inform Stan: "It was left here by a lorry driver, many years ago. He dumped it there after delivering bails of straw to the farm, on the other side of the river."

Stan smiled. He liked the idea of his family staying here; it was indeed far away from the capital of the virtual world. He stuttered to say something, but nothing came out.

"The man must have got fed up with his job, eh..." he eventually muttered.

“No doubt,” replied the farmer. “Italian, I heard he was, never saw him though. Well, my friend that is how it was left here in this area. It is all yours now.”

Stan had heard about the lorry driver through his contacts in the White church. Apparently, the Italian driver got so fed up with the company he was working for that he dumped the container in the field, then headed to the city, caught a train to the coast, and headed back to Italy.

It was a perfect place for staying out of sight. No one would think anyone was living in it. So, by the end of the week, Stan and Mary and little Sarah had moved in to their countryside retreat, a large container on the west coast of Scotia.

It was a breath of fresh air for all of them. Yes, every day now after breakfast they went down to the river below in the valley to have what little Sarah called, ‘the morning picnic’.

The timing was good too. It was June, and this was always the best month for weather in Scotia. You only had to look around to know that - everything was in full bloom.

Yes this may be an idyllic area, but even here in this lovely area in the countryside evil was lurking. The virtual police had a contact not far

from the Mill. Unbeknown to the farmer a Mr Kane who rented the house there from him, not far from the mill, was a snitch. Indeed, he was not what he appeared to be a retired man from an unknown institute.

All this happened a year ago. Neighbours knew someone was living in the old cottage, but Kane had as the saying goes kept himself to himself. Virtual agent Kane, although retired, before leaving the city was given the instructions to report on anything suspicious in and around the area back to the virtual police office. This was of course where Fusby and Lance worked.

In this lovely country area where no one knew anything about Kane he reported on his neighbours constantly. Unknown to his neighbours, he was a spy on the payroll of the virtual police. As soon as he saw there was a new family up at the farm, he was onto the virtual office back in Dùn Èideann.

One day when the local spy was walking over to the train station, a good distance beyond the farm, he saw a young child running around and he took a picture of her. On the train on the way into town, he alerted his contact Mr Lance in the virtual division in the city of Dùn Èideann. On

receiving the photo message, Lance ran a trace on the facial recognition program. And it was from that moment they knew Stan the Man was staying in this area. Right away a plan was put in place by the two well known detectives, Fusby and Lance, to arrest him and bring him in to the virtual custody suite.

Lance the following night visited Fusby's house in the Morningside area, south of the capital. They liked to do this before they got their teeth into a new case. Fusby did not need an excuse to have a glass of wine and munch at imported nuts before organising a mission. When it was business he always gave his deputy Lance a can of beer, but nothing to eat, when he visited him to discuss business.

Fusby, after he handed his colleague his beer, said in a polite ministerial tone to him: "Well done, Lance finding the Covenanter,' then he paused to show he was satisfied. "Good wine this, from the supermarket too. How is your beer?"

"Very good, boss."

Fusby liked everything neat and tidy. His house reflected this. After sitting down on the settee opposite Lance, Fusby as usual to show he was happy beamed his delight to an unknown

friend somewhere in the stratosphere. He certainly looked relaxed now. “I think we should be cautious though Lance; it is best if we wait until the child is out of doors, or visiting a friend, before we snatch him. We can take him quietly into the new virtual custody suite and charge him there.”

“Sooner the better, boss,” growled Lance.

Due to all the criminal cases Lance had been involved in, he pondered for a moment. He always liked to show his boss he had done his homework. A pertinent question duly followed. In a low tone, he murmured: “What are you thinking of charging him with?”

“Oh, that’s your department, Lance. I am to busy, I am sure you will come up with something.”

Lance smiled and relaxed in his comfortable chair; for he knew all the new virtual laws. In fact, he had them stored on his personal computer at home from the office digital database: “Hate speech sounds about right to me, and something else thrown in under the communications act - that should do it. We will get him on one or the other and see him caged.”

“Well done,” echoed Fusby, as he looked up at the ceiling again, as if the very act was written

there for them both to observe. “You are mindful of the bail conditions?”

“I am,” said Lance in his usual dull way.

Lance’s long creepy look seemed to go right through his boss. It would send a chill down anyone’s back. It was just as well Fusby knew him. This was the way Lance acted with those about to be charged. Fusby understood that look only to well and he ignored it.

After everything was discussed and put in place, the arresting team, virtual assistants, the transport was booked. Fusby had only now to pick a day to go out to the country and arrest the suspect. The operation was fittingly called Covenanter.

Just before their meeting ended that evening, Fusby received Intel that Sarah their young daughter was going to stay with a friend nearby. Mr Ross, who was a doctor in the local area, and was a member of the White church.

The virtual police gambled that he would know about the child. He had been careless and used the office email to send notice of this to a fellow in the White church. Lance had got someone to hack his email account. This paid off. The virtual cops, when they realised little Sarah

was living up near the farm, knew that she would want to be with other children.

"I propose Fair Monday, next month?" said Fusby followed by a sniff, then a look at the ceiling again, "I believe they may be on the move soon after that."

The following month, fair Monday as they called it in Glaschu, early that Morning, Fusby and Lance left their office in the city centre of Dùn Èideann, and travelled to the other side of the country. They did this in their infamous driverless white van.

Operation Covenanter was now underway. This was an operation to entrap Stan the Man and bring him back to the virtual police office sometime later that afternoon.

It was indeed a lovely summer's day: "far too nice to sit in this van," moaned Lance, as they set off."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country Stan and his family were getting ready for their breakfast. As usual that morning they planned to go down to the river and have their picnic. Indeed, Stan was in need of a rest; for he had been up all night writing out his thoughts on the New Covenant for his nation.

“When can we go outside?” asked little Sarah “I want to collect the eggs again from the hens.”

Her mother looked up: “Soon dear,” she answered and smiled, as she fidgeted with the air heater.

“Why don’t we have a cooker, mummy?”

Half an hour later, Stan put down his pen, stood up, stretched himself and, as he yawned embraced the day by announcing: “Right who wants to go down to the river and guddle for fish?”

“Me,” echoed the young voice inside the container.

“Well, with the weather so lovely, we really should not be hanging about, should we?”

Sarah loved this idea so much that she jumped up and down and sang the song that her friend at school Abigail had taught her: “Old Mac Donald had a farm e-i-e-i-o…”

After Mary had made the beds, cleaned up the area where they now lived, she made some sandwiches, filled the large flask they liked to take with them, and changed into her outdoor shoes and got ready to go.

It was just like when she was young when she stayed in the house near Gollan. It was a lovely

memory. Every day then she would go to the lovely beach there to build sandcastles and paddle in the sea.

Just before the old fashioned clock, that the farmer gave them, chimed eleven bells, on the table, off they went down to the river.

Everyone was happy for they all knew they would soon be lost in the lovely countryside far away from anyone. This was a indeed a wonderful place to live, and enjoy life.

Meanwhile, little Fusby and lanky Lance, as they were known in the virtual office, were traveling at a steady pace in the driverless van towards their prey. They were now well past the city of Glaschu and deep in suburbs of the southside.

There had hardly been any conversation between them since they left the capital; both constantly drank water from small plastic bottles provided for them courtesy of the virtual police office.

As if to waken them up, the onboard computer suddenly announced: 'We will soon be approaching the farm where the target, the Covenanter, is holding out with his family.'

Lance looked across at Fusby: “I had better alert Kane on the mobile, boss. We will be arriving soon,” he said in a tense low voice.

Fusby nodded for him to do this. Operation Covenanter was certainly under way now. A further update followed: “We will be arriving at the designated spot in exactly 10 minutes.’ said the natural voice of Laura the onboard computer voice once again.

The two virtual detectives were not alone. Sitting in the back of this driverless white van, along with Fusby and Lance, were two young virtual detectives, one male and one young female. Both of them sat staring out of the van through the two way mirror.

It was clear they were trying to acclimatise themselves as to where they were. And it was noticeable too from their eyes they had never seen such beautiful countryside before. The white telecom driverless van had windows on all sides.

The view was spectacular. Like all visitors to this part of the world they were now enchanted by a lovely landscape around them. Not that it meant much to the two Virtual cops, who were sitting beside them, leading this latest mission.

“Now Lance,” announced Fusby, “We don’t want any hiccups.”

“There will be none boss. I have the cuffs here,” and he showed him the clamps.

They both, from the van, could see from where they sat the farm where Stan and his family were holding out.

‘We expect the target to leave the container in five minutes,” was the alert from the onboard computer.’

The snooper Kane got that same update, and he confirmed this by email adding in a professional manner: ‘Yes, that is the time they leave in the morning.’

And right enough within a few minutes the little group: Stan, Mary and little Sarah, could be seen heading out of the large container where they lived. They all looked so happy as they walked down to the idyllic spot in the direction of the river opposite the dam.

Fusby was on his phone to all parties via h.q. as his training had taught him in other operations.

“Target, I see them cutting across the fields,” another report came in from a drone.

Lance too was following the action on his handheld device. In his usual growling voice, he

updated the snitch again this time by ringing him: "Right Kane. They are heading down to the river. Stand by. We will grab the lot of them!"

Fusby was never one to take rash decisions However, for some odd reason as soon as he heard his partner Lance say this he got a rush of blood to his head. Suddenly, inside the van there was a terrible noice; for although not tall Fusby's bald head cracked off the roof of the van before he sprang out the back door:

Once in the open field he composed himself, then he shouted out like a cavalry man: "Right after them, come on!"

The whole team, that is the two young virtual cops, and his deputy inspector Lance all flew out of the back of the driverless van following him to capture Stan the Man and his family.

Down opposite the dam, as she had done the day before Mary was laying the tablecloth under the old oak tree that overhung the river. As soon as she had done this she noticed all of a sudden the birds fly out of the trees nearby, and make their way along to the far end of the riverbank towards the mill. Crows, magpies, sparrows and pewees; they all got such a fright. But what was the cause of this? It was not her or her family that

had upset them; they were always respectful to the wildlife around them. The knew the ways of country living.

"What has upset our friends?" pondered Stan out loud, as he watched the birds fly in the direction of the old mill.

Little Katie didn't seem to mind though. She picked up her plastic cup that she knew would soon have some lemon juice in it.

With the picnic table laid, Mary relaxed. However, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed four figures coming down the hill running towards them, as if in some kind of cross country marathon. She could see at the front of this little group was a little fat chap followed by a tall thin man, and behind them what looked like two young students.

"Target is at the picnic table, not far from the dam. We are moving in to apprehend them," Lance roared back to base, from the hidden microphone in his earpiece.

When little Sarah saw the two figures she thought them funny. So much so she stood up and said: "The wee fat man has just fallen over!" and she giggled.

Everyone who lived here in the country knew at the end of the path there was a rock hidden in the grass; it had at one time been there with others to signify where the path led towards the derelict cottage. However, the grass had covered it over. With no one living in the old cottage, and unless you knew about it, it would invariably catch you out if you were heading that way down towards the river.

With little Fusby now on the deck, big lanky Lance took charge. He shouted as he ran past him: "Don't worry, boss, I will get him," and he thundered down the hill towards the river in search of his target: the Covenanter.

Lance even gave himself some personal encouragement now that he was on his own, "he will not get far. I'll get him boss..."

"Stan, quick run!" cried Mary."

Then little Sarah echoed: "The numpties are coming!"

It was just as well in this strange time, Stan the Man was young and fit. He was always on the go and could outrun anyone of his age. In no time at all he was on his way heading across to the other side of the river leaving the virtual numpties far behind.

Like a flash Stan crossed over the river leaping from one stone to another. He used to do this kind of thing as a young lad when he was here on holiday, and anyone looking at him today could see he had not lost his touch.

Soon he was in the wooded area on the other side, hidden from view from those who were chasing him. Stan, Mary could see, was heading for what is still called in this area the plantin.

"At least Stan will be free from them," muttered Mary to herself, as she cuddled little Sarah.

No doubt wondering why the big lanky chap was after her father, Sarah in her arms wondered to her mother: "Why have the virtual numpties come to take daddy away?"

"Oh, they want to promote some new pagan culture, dear."

Sarah may have been only eight years old, but she knew what her mother was saying was true. The child had been given the grace to have good parents who followed the teachings written in the Bible.

"Good afternoon madam, my name is Mr Fusby " he announced now standing over Mary. I have to inform you, you are under arrest. We

need to take you and the child to the station for questioning."

The two younger officers, one woman and one man also appeared and stood guard over them. They seemed to be friendly, as if this was the virtual way to deal with those they arrested."

"Don't be afraid Sarah," her mother said comforting her.

The young virtual police women standing there beside her tried to be kind too, and in a sweet voice declared: "When we get to the station, you will get a nice cup of tea inside the virtual suite."

As his training had taught him, Fusby tried as well to be civil even though he was red as a beetroot.

Little Sarah laughed at him, "Mummy, he looks like a wee gnome with dirty trousers on," she turned and said.

There was no doubt about it, the chief definitely looked odd; for he had grass coming out of his bald head.

Sarah noticed this too. However, the police woman who had huge blown up Botox lips, purple hair, and what looked like an unusual tan tried to be kind again. She continued to smile as

best she could at the little girl to make herself look friendly.

The virtual policewoman was definitely not the type of person who came to the countryside during the week or even at weekends. Even young Sarah could see that.

No way had she had ever guddled for fish in the river nearby the dam, or ambled in the meadows between the farms with family or friends."

"Is that what they call the trout pout mummy?" asked little Sarah quite innocently.

"You can now take them to the virtual station" said Fusby to the young virtual cop with the purple hair. "Inspector Lance and I will be along later."

Meanwhile down at the riverbank, Lance got up a head of steam. He dashed across the river like Stan had in his pursuit of him.

Everyone in this little group, Mary, Sarah, the two young virtual cops, and little Fusby, all stopped for a moment and stared at him.

It started off well, Lance negotiated the first part of the crossing up as far as the waterfall. It was obvious to him and others that when he reached this part of the river near the falls, he

would have to try and do the same as Stan the Man, leap from one boulder to another to cross the fast moving part of the stream as the rapid stream edged nearer to the falls.

Even from a faraway distance little Sarah could see Lanky Lance was not a country man; he certainly did not understand the dangers hidden in nature. This soon became apparent. The moss from the second stone got him, and like an ice skater, taking his eye off the landing, after a lovely pirouette, in he went straight into the river like someone high on drink or drugs.

This made little Sarah forget all about the terror these men had brought to this lovely idyllic place where she now stayed. She screamed with pleasure and delight. "The numpty has gone into the drink mummy," she roared with laughter.

Her mother did not laugh though; for she was obviously thinking more about what the rest of the day had in store for them.

Presently the child and her mother were taken up past the farm, and from there they were told they were going to be taken to the virtual police station on the southside of the city of Glaschu.

Meantime up at the farm, the farmer and his wife behind the net curtains were looking out

through them; they could see all that was happening down at the dam. The farmer knew the virtual police would soon be at their door. Mary could see them too, but she knew they would not come out for fear of being arrested. No one trusted the virtual police these days.

Sarah saw the farmer and smiled at him before the driverless police van drove them away. Even though no one had told her, little Sarah knew not to wave goodbye like she normally did when leaving the container."

45

Stan the Man managed to escape without much bother. He knew the woods like the back of his hand. After all, it was here in the country as a boy he had roamed around with other country lads. His parents had holidayed near the farm every summer until his father passed away. This was his spiritual home.

Even the helicopter that appeared overhead with heated sensors could not detect him. Knowing the tools they had against him he hid inside a tree until nightfall. This was no ordinary

tree though. Many years ago it had been carved out by locals as a hiding place from the authorities. Stan knew where it was. He used to play hide and seek here along with country friends.

Many years ago, the farmer's boy told him that he made the tree house. Stan never believed that story, but whoever did make it, he knew it was a great place to hide in. In the modern era, he could see someone had lined the inside of the tree with a special foil that hid body heat from the drones in the air, or men with computers on the ground.

As expected the virtual police came by with dogs that night, but this tree had another secret to it: an underground shaft. As he sat inside the secret tree, he patiently waited for the new day.

Stan could not help but wonder about the story he had heard that it was locals during the war that had made this secret hideout.

It seemed plausible that it would have come about during the Second World War. Stan knew at that time a local artist painted near the old cottage not far from the farm during the war. He wondered if it was him who built it to escape the Nazis; for there were certainly reports early on in

the war that the Germans were going to invade Britain.

Of course, the hidden tree as they called it, had been updated since that time by other men in the area. There was always someone on the run from the virtual police, or state militias, these days.

Whoever constructed 'the hidden tree', as they called it in these parts, he was grateful. It was very helpful and considerate for the locals to keep this secret going on; for this was a dangerous era he was living in. This was an era where machine was against man, and virtual man was against Homo Sapiens. Before it got dark he read the note someone left on the wall on how to proceed in the morning:

Cross the field and head for the cow shed, at the back of the farm you will find a bike. Read the note inside the saddle of the bike for further instructions. Good luck.

So early the next morning, Stan left his secret abode. He knew a plan would be in place for him to escape the clutches of the virtual police. White church members would be active getting him out

of this area as quick as they could to the coast, then onto France. What he had to do was head to the coast and catch Simon's trawler there.

In the time of the reign of Mag the Monster, Simon was always rescuing members and helping them escape from the virtual police.

As soon as the light came up, Chloe the farmer's wife brought out of the cupboard a large jar of honey bought from the corner shop down on the main road. She knew the owner of the shop, who walked by this way on his way to work, would see it.

The honey in the window was a sign to alert the old man of the village, Sandy the shepherd. Sandy would then contact another friend, and that friend would then put in place a plan to get Stan the Man out of the clutches of the virtual police.

Stan was feeling great; he had managed to throw them off. He had a good night's sleep in the old tree. He knew Sandy the Shepherd would be involved in helping him in someway; he had spent many a night at Sandy's house in the old bothy when he was a young lad with his father.

As per instructions, he read inside the tree in the morning, Stan walked out of the wooded

area. When he came to the fence he crossed over it. He then went behind the cowshed and as was written he picked up a bike opposite the piggery. The farmer had left it there for him early that morning.

Inside the satchel was a change of clothing, and under the saddle a message how to get to the coast. He was good man was the farmer. Stan gave thanks there were still people in this area loyal and true to the cause of helping others.

After he had changed into his new clothes he pulled up his hood, climbed across the bike and he was just about to peddle away when he heard a soft voice from behind the shed say to him: "Aye me lad, the quickest way to freedom, is to take that path over there and you will be away in no time at all. Someone will pick you up tomorrow from the old hut on the moor."

Stan of course knew the voice of old Sandy and the way he had to go. The hut was halfway over the moor. He peddled on heading in the direction of the coast. His destination was the Cairn to catch a fishing vessel to the continent. However, he knew he had a few places to stop overnight before that.

It was obvious that the hired team sent to arrest him would be scanning all the cameras at traffic lights from the large poles erected above the roads. It was well known that the virtual cops had agents in every area; they were hard to avoid these days.

They were even many in business, civic authority, leisure clubs and healthcare, every day passing information onto the virtual police. The excuse was this was done to help them arrest someone who would not conform to the virtual world.

The snoopers were told to lookout for White church members. Stan knew that much. With a change of clothes, sunglasses, false beard and cushion stomach, he hoped that the cameras would not be able to identify him. He knew that in a flash they could do that from the images they had of him on their virtual systems. Stan peddled on.

It was obvious to Stan that the virtual police would be at this very moment scanning the highways and the byways to find him. They knew he would have to surface somewhere, as he tried to make his way to another part of the country.

Stan, like other members of the White church, who were escaping the clutches of the state, knew that when he got off his bike he would have to walk differently; for AI would have his details, mannerisms and movements recorded. This came from all sorts of computer banks stored all over the world. He knew the virtual police had data on every citizen.

On his bike, Stan cut through the lanes and byways until he came out at the village of Eglischane. He had read in the hidden tree that from the village he should take the moor road and spend the night in the hut there.

Once again this information was left for him inside the tree of life. Many years ago he had read how the Covenanters did this in olden times, how they had hid in caves and coves. One story in particular had stayed with Stan. It was about Alexander Peden; for he too wore a mask as he fled from the terror of the state.

As Stan journeyed on, the beauty of the wild open countryside really affected him. The weather was lovely. Stan, the outlaw, was in his element in this environment. It was a beautiful summer's day and, as he peddled on to keep his

spirits up, he sang songs to himself: hymns and ballads from his youth.

Singing always soothed Stan the Man. He loved music. The choir of angels of the White church singers he could hear singing to him from places near and far. Stan knew their hymns chased away the dark forces that inhabit the places where no one wants to go.

He knew he would have to lay low for a few days in this area where he was told to go to. There would be a signal when the time came to move on and head over to the coast when all was clear. This is where Simon's fishing boat left every other day with dissidents to escape to the continent.

It was well known in the White church, ever other day Simon's vessel headed for France with oysters and other fish caught from Scotia seaside resorts like The Slopes and Loch Ryan. His boat was full of men and women escaping the virtual cops. They fish he caught were destined for the posh restaurant in Paris and Bordeaux. On the other hand, the outlaws went on to places where the White church were active in France and other European countries. Yes, it was a good plan, Stan

would make his way to the coast, then from the French capital, he would take a train to Geneva.

Although happy peddling along and singing to himself, Stan understood he would have to live apart from his wife and child for a time. He tried not to dwell on that though. His daughter Sarah, he knew would be well looked after by the members of the White church.

Thus far the White church had not been infiltrated by the virtual people. Many people were interested living apart from the virtual world these days, after Mag the Monster had come to power. Outlaws like him sought sanctuary abroad.

Right from the outset, Stan had been very much aware of the virtual police and how the country was being controlled by unscrupulous men and women. He knew the only way to resolve this was to bring about a reformation. Now that he was on the run, Stan knew the authorities would be keeping a close eye on all the White church members, especially the ones that knew him.

Mary he knew would not succumb to the worship of idols. She would keep well away from the virtual world. He was secure in knowing that. Stan had often said to his wife: “Mary, if ever I go

abroad, do not worry, I will return. I will come back and save the country from the idolaters," he often quoted a famous phrase from olden times: 'Give me Scotia or I die."

It was true that during the reign of Mag the Monster many people had migrated to the countryside to try and escape the virtual authorities. However, with complete state control over the Internet, few people even there felt safe anymore in small towns and country villages, as faraway as the coast.

In this new pagan world of surveillance everywhere the citizen went his data and details followed him, and were picked up and stored for the possibility of being used against him. Only if you were on the move, living in a cave, or an underground bunker, was it possible to completely hide away from the digital control of the virtual barons. Everyone had to be extremely careful in society now.

All his friends in the White church knew it would take years before Stan would return to his homeland. Like many others, before him, there needed to be a reformation of both church and state before the country would function again as a God fearing land. It was plain for those who lived

in this land that they were now controlled by the tech giants, corporate agencies and unscrupulous people who ran cartels. The majority of citizens had given up on freedom.

As he peddled on through the lovely countryside, Stan surveyed some of the farms and outhouses way out in the hinterland, as he headed for the moors. He could not help but think to himself: "This is a good place to live. At least you could see the virtual cops approach if they were coming out to get you."

Stan knew his family would be happy to live here, free from surveillance and far from the virtual police. That was what he always advised his friends in the White church to do: "Find a place where there is no interference from the virtual state, and settle down there."

Stan knew in the days he was living in that you could not have any electric device on you wherever you went; for the drones would soon find you. Not long after that the virtual cops would tun up at your door and arrest you. You could only avoid the heat seeking drones by moving quickly from place to place.

He was looking forward to staying in the hut on the moor tonight, then visiting Peden's cave

the next day by the River Lugar just below the farm of Auchinbay. Then it was onto the coast he would go and board the trawler and sail for France.

All the white church members knew Simon's ship sailed every second day to France from the coast down this way. Stan thought after a few days hiding out in Peden's cave, his contacts would let him know when to make a dash for freedom. After all, It was only a few hours by bike to the coast from the cave.

The White church he knew had alerted friends to leave another bike for him not far from the hut along the moor road where he was going to stay tonight. This was so as not to cause any attention from the satellite cameras. The bike was used in that area every day by the local postman and would not be flagged up on any software program.

The hideout along the moor road was fine. It was an old hut hidden behind a forrest of trees. As soon as he entered it, Stan could see that he could stay here for a few more days if he wanted to; for there was plenty of provisions left by the White church for him.

There were many safe places like this all over the west coast of Scotia. After all, this was an old Covenanting area he was in, was it not. The people who had lived here in days gone by had been through state oppression many times before.

Even the Huguenots, of course, did the same kind of thing too in France, before they escaped over to Scotia, and other parts of the Kingdom. Many Huguenots in fact were still living here in this part on the west coast of Scotia, and many had been drawn to the White church.

As he sat there in the hut, Stan remembered what little Sarah had shouted to him the other day before he fled the picnic scene down by the river: "The numpties are coming!" when he thought about that again it made him cry.

It also came into his head that he had told Mary not to switch on any tech device when staying in safe houses. "I won't be calling you," Stan had told her with a heavy heart.

Stan knew he had to be cruel to be kind. He and his family had remained undetected from the virtual police due to the fact they were 'signal free' as they called it in these days. There had been little interference from the virtual agents after they had given up on the tech world.

It was only after his outspoken comments on the street about the virtual state, he felt their presence again. There had been only one incident. It first happened after an old mobile phone was accidentally switched on when they were in a friend's house. The virtual police turned up not long after, but they managed to escape through a window at the back of the house. After that when they moved from house to house, and from place to place, they were very careful about such things.

Stan knew that the virtual state employed individuals to keep an eye on their neighbours. This did not concern him now though for he was out in the middle of nowhere.

The other thing that the virtual state were well known for was their involvement in allowing banks to close accounts of citizens who were not following what they considered was a 'virtual lifestyle'. The usual procedure that happened was that the bank would end the account of the client without notice. In the days of the virtual parliament, banks had plenty of time to profile their clients online.

Citizens, who were let's say not following certain political standards, were soon isolated.

From that point on they were classified as non desirables. Once they were excluded from the state system they would have no money in reserve. This did not bother those who avoided detection. They put cash under their bed; for cash was still king in the virtual world.

Even though you were looked down upon in society as lower class if you brought out cash to pay for goods. This was a failing according to the new tech barons and their virtual numpties who promoted that a virtual lifestyle was the only way to live. Yes, it was not uncommon at this time for a citizen to receive a letter from their longstanding bank saying:

Dear Investor,
After a bank review we have found your investments are not in accordance with our standards.
We are sorry to inform you, but your account will be closed at the end of the month. Please move your savings and investments to another provider. You have two weeks to do so.

Of course, when they tried to move their account to another bank they were barred there

too. They also said the same kind of thing. With no bank account, the citizen was in effect a non citizen, an alien, in his or her own land. This was the way the Virtual party treated those who would not follow their woke ways in the days of virtual world in the land of Scotia.

If you are not in the virtual world, then you are not living life to the full. That was what was after all the party slogan at the last election proclaimed. It was that kind of nonsense that catapulted the virtual party and Mag the Monster to power.

Early the next morning a well known local bakery van, with the words Billy Graham and Company, painted on the side of it, stopped on the moor road. It was about a hundred yards from where the old rundown hut, hidden by trees, was situated.

Every morning this road was always busy with cars passing by this way heading down the coast to the costal towns there; people heading to work or delivering goods. Today was no different.

Not far away from where his blue van stopped, within five minutes out from behind a tree came Stan the Man.

The driver had already the passenger window rolled down: “There’s been a change of plan Stan. I have to take you to the secret hideout by a roundabout way,” he shouted in a broad Scotia accent.

Stan chatted with Mark the driver. He recognised him from a White church service he had been to a long time ago in the west end of the city centre of Glaschu. He remembered him as a happy jovial chap who had been living on the southside of Scotia for over ten years now.

The driver was upbeat about his passenger’s prospects of escaping the virtual police. He spoke the way many locals do even though his accent betrayed that he not a native of the west coast of Scotia: “It is good to see you Stan. Don’t you worry mate you will soon be in France away from the virtual detectives and Mag the Monster.”

“Sounds good to me Mark,” laughed Stan the Man.

“I have been told to take you the back way to avoid the motorway cameras.”

“That is ok with me, Mark. Let’s go.”

Indeed it all went well after a night, this time in Peden's cove in name, Stan boarded the fishing vessel bound for France the next day. With no security issues to preoccupy him, Stan started working again on the new Confession of faith for his home nation of Scotia.

This first draft was sent back via the skipper to be delivered by hand to the head of the White church back home with the instructions for it to be read out to all members of the church:

Confession by Elected Members of Scotia

As a citizen of Scotia, and the only author of Scotia who has been given the task to save the country from the virtual world, I hereby ask the Scotia parliament to accept that they have departed from the ways of God, and must now return to the faith and accept that Scotia is a Christian nation. This is laid out in The Confession of Faith of 1560 and must continue.

The Confession Of Faith Professed And Believed By The Protestants Within The Realm Of Scotia, Published By Them In Parliament, And By The Estates Thereof Ratified And Approved, As

Wholesome And Sound Doctrine, Grounded Upon The Infallible Truth Of God's Word.

The members of the Scotia Parliament, who have been elected by the people must show a clear sign of repentance to the people of our nation and accept a new Confession of Faith, and on the appointed day when the parliament convenes, after the summer recess all members elected of the parliament who represent the people, must walk along Doddle Street to the parliament, and on that day when in parliament pass the following motion written out here to be proclaimed:

We the elected members, elected by the people of Scotia, who hold the sacred duty to represent our nation, accept that Scotia is a Christian land, and we hereby promise under our sovereign king to proclaim Scotia a Christian nation.

The members of the virtual parliament must on behalf of the people admit that they have in ignorance turned away from God and repent and believe the gospel.

Stan knew his church friends would see to it that the important document would be delivered to the free thinkers. There were still one or two good journalists in the country who knew the history of the land of Scotia, and they would put this to the public in private forums via contacts inside the new media.

Stan arrived at the French port of Dunkirk later that evening and from there he made his way to Paris by hired car, driven by a Hugnought. Early the next morning he boarded a train to Switzerland.

98

When he arrived in mid afternoon, Stan found the area in Geneva where he was told to go to where the White church were active in. He had heard about this from the folks back home in Dùn Èideann.

Stan knew that no one used technology in this area here. It was only by word of mouth was how messages were passed on from one believer to another. Before setting out Stan was given the address by the courier he met in France of the safe house in this district. He was to go to

Zwingli's old church and there outside draw the number 7 with a piece of white chalk on the noticeboard. A friend would come forward the same day to greet him.

t was nice to see people going about their business so early in the morning not staring like numpties into their digital devices. Yes, indeed he could see this was an area where friends stayed free from the control of the virtual state and the tech barons.

Stan would stay in this area and from here would move to and from to France whenever he liked. Of course, he knew by this time the virtual police would have alerted their contacts abroad and they would be on the look out for him. For the first time in a long time a sense of freedom came over him, and he was happy to be here.

He knew of course the virtual police had contacts all over the world. Some of his friends in the White church called them digital posts. However, in this area he knew there was a community who distrusted the virtual world and would not allow surveillance of their residents.

Strangers soon got the message and moved away. Presently, his contact Mr Wishart came along the street carrying a book titled *Three Good*

Men and True by the writer Robert Watson, that was the sign he was looking for.

His friend here had good contacts and word would soon got through to the White church in Geneva that the virtual police in Europe had indeed found out that Stan, who had been active in Scotia, had arrived there.

It came to light that a digital post who was active near Gare Est station, sent a message to the virtual police that he had spotted Stan the Man at the station. The spy must have alerted the local agency he worked for and this was duly passed back to the virtual police in the land of Scotia. It was not clear though if they knew he had boarded a ship for the continent and this was how he had escaped abroad.

In fact, Stan's image had been picked up in a few places in Paris, as he made his way to the main train station.

It was not long after the reports reached the virtual police that the two famous agents from the virtual office were duly sent for by Mag the Monster. They were to undertake a very important mission, or as she put it in her own inimitable way in an email to them: 'Make

contact with the Covenanter and make sure he doesn't return to our virtual land.'

A few days later, the head of virtual police Inspector Fusby filed a report to Mag the Monster telling her that they had picked up reports from agents in Europe: Stan the Man had been spotted in Geneva on the outskirts visiting friends in a White church there.

Word soon got round the office that the two infamous detectives Fusby and Lance had been assigned to capture and kill Stan the Man. Like all virtual cops, they were sent confirmation of this mission through an encrypted app.

As soon as they received their instructions they headed to the airport to board the next flight to the continent to intercept the target code named: Covenanter.

As they traveled to the airport to catch the plane more Intel duly followed about the movements of Stan the Man to assist the two detectives.

The target had been spotted in a hotel by the lakeside and thereafter on a street not faraway; he was seen out walking with a woman with an old English sheepdog.

As they were waiting at the airport Fusby in his usual cheery manner answered his phone. “Good afternoon inspector Fusby speaking,”

After some digital interaction with h.q. a voice not unlike the old screen star Greta Garbo came into the chief detective’s ear: “Inspector Fusby. I would like you and Mr Lance to take care of target codenamed Covenanter. Do you understand what I mean?”

“Oh yes, Virtual minister. I understand perfectly. You can count on our department. We are here already at the airport and are ready to undertake this case.”

“I am glad to hear that Mr Fusby. Please report back when the mission is over,” and with that an ominous dead sound followed on the phone.

Deep learning and AI had become so accurate manipulating images that they could no longer be used as evidence; for they were easily manipulated. No one now could tell if photo evidence, or captured audio was real or counterfeit anymore.

The virtual police had tried this against Stan the Man in the past. The virtual boffins working

for them had even produced an image of him making love to a woman from the White church, in a field near to where they both lived. The filmed showed them lying there next to a river. The summer weather made the scene inviting to look at. It was as if they were on holiday or part of a film. The crime the virtual prosecutor put against him was not adultery, but indecent exposure.

They could not find Stan, so they arrested the woman, and of course the image was posted throughout all media sites. However, in court the images they used were not deemed authentic and the defence lawyer who was a member of the White church managed to shutdown the case before it got going. Some brave bloggers were starting to make great fun of what the virtual cops were up to now.

No one believed their virtual evidence any more in the courts, or at civil and criminal tribunals. That may be so, but they could still trace people and bring them to court and harangue them.

Sometimes these cases went on for years. The process was the punishment to try and undermine anyone who did not accord with virtual living in

the year of the virtual parliament. Stan knew all of this and after the arrest kept himself hidden as far as he could from the virtual cops.

Consequently, the authorities could not arrest him on the street due to the fact White church members were always with him.

The authorities knew they would stand up in court for Stan and witness to the fact he had done nothing wrong. The message that had come to the two virtual detectives was something different though. They were now on their way to intercept him and kill him.

89

Both detectives Lance and Fusby were nearing retirement and both were keen to put on a good show before they headed off into the sunset. After all, they knew this may be their last mission to serve their virtual leader.

All the young virtual cops would surely look up to them after they had been pensioned off. ‘Yes, Fusby and Lance were the boys who ended the career of the well known poet and activist Stan the Man.’

This accolade would live on in the memory of all virtual cops. Most people in the virtual police office regarded Stan as an agitator, not unlike Stephen the Deacon. Stan the Man was what they used to call a working class hero. This was a derogatory term now for most workers in the virtual world.

Word soon got round the office, and everyone in the virtual section who knew them, that Fusby and Lance had been personally sent for by Mag the Monster 'to undertake a very dangerous and important mission,' This was what was reported to all who knew them.

The code name Covenanter for the target was appropriate, everyone thought. The two virtual cops Fusby and Lance liked it too. Fusby who showed an interest in literature of course had made it up the name in his usual smarmy way.

The memo that Fusby got, prior to leaving for the airport from the virtual minister's office, the inspector read aloud to all the staff in his office before embarking on the mission.

He wanted the younger cops to see of course that he was super efficient, and had the ear of the leader of the virtual parliament: 'I am asking you virtual commander Fusby to personally oversee

this delicate mission on behalf of your country. It is top secret of course and should not be shared with any other agency other than your own department. Please keep me updated with developments, as we proceed to intercept the target.'

The two detectives Fusby and Lance may have been close friends. However, like many other friends in life they really knew nothing about each other. Lance was a hypochondria and Fusby a fantasist. The former thought he was always being followed by criminals. The latter saw himself as a modern day Napoleon, going out every day to rule the world.

Lance suffered greatly from the past; he had nightmares about the people he had investigated early on in his career. He kept checking up on them on the Internet at the virtual police office and also keeping tabs on where they lived. After he left the enforcement division, he was sure there was a price on his head.

The little corporal on the other hand had no such worries; he dreamed about helping Mag the Monster run the country. Off duty, he loved to travel with his wife to seek out top class restaurants at home and abroad.

“Passports, gentlemen, please.”

The delightful slim young French lady with blonde hair tied back in a bun, dressed in a light blue suit, stared down at Fusby’s fat belly.

The flight stewardess could see that even though the two men in front of her were traditionally dressed, they were oddballs. To her French mind, they looked like eccentric Brits off to wander around some capital city for the weekend.

Her Scotia male colleague had said as much to her in an undertone: “Those two would not look out of place at a “Jehovah Witness meeting,” he joked, as he stretched over to pick up a discarded flight ticket left on the check in desk.

The French young lady attendant smiled and hoped the two odd balls did not hear her Scotia colleague, or speak any French: “*outré*,” she observed.

The French stewardess could see from their documents the two odd fellows had not been outside the UK since Brexit. Even in an international airport, where all sorts came and went, they didn’t have look funny though standing there in front of her.

Her Scotia colleague whispered again to her: “One looks like a dumb waiter, the other an undertaker.”

For her own pleasure she kept them waiting: “Gentlemen, the gate is not open yet. Can I check the weight of your hand luggage, please?”

Like many French young ladies British men, who had never had much experience outside suburbia, fascinated her. It was as if the two odd balls were about to enter a temple somewhere out in the middle of nowhere, and this was them waiting to be called forth to do such a thing.

The tall man whose passport surname read Lance, she read with interest, he was 6ft 2 inches tall. From his profile picture, he looked constipated and looking up at him again in real time she could see he had not changed since that snap. The air stewardess also noticed he had a habit of looking down at the little chap beside him as if he was important to him. He was obviously his boss.

“Flight on time?” asked little Fusby, as he held onto his trolley case.

“It is sir.”

Thereafter, the French stewardess watched the two of them wander over to the side of the queue waiting to be called to board the plane.

Her Scotia colleague who was still beside her had a great sense of humour. He whispered once more into her ear: "Don't you think, the wee chap has got a way of waddling even standing still."

The young lady smiled at him, then replied in her lovely French English accent: "I think by the way Mr Fusby walks, he wants to show everyone he is happy," and she giggled like a schoolgirl.

However, the French stewardess couldn't help wonder aloud again about the man named Lance, his partner. An expression she had often heard, but was never quite sure what it really meant, she asked her colleague: "Is that what the British call a long drink of water?"

"Aye, you right there, my dear," he said and chuckled.

"That is a lovely expression. I like that very much."

Just then, the little gnome waiting to board the flight to Paris to her delight once more came over and spoke to her: "Can you please check the time of the arrival time of the flight, madam?"

“Certainly, sir,” she said wondering why he could not read this on his ticket. “If it is not, on time, I have not been told sir,” she commented.

“Thank you,” replied Fusby in a friendly, but firm tone. He then turned to Lance who had followed him over. “Have you spotted our friend, yet?”

The long drink of water said out of the side of his mouth: “Fusby, I don’t know where the contact has got to?”

The little general looked nonplussed at this, and the foreign stewardess looked at him again for she could see Mr Fusby was confused about something.

When they were called to board, Fusby was one of the first in the queue. The French stewardess could not hold back speaking to him again: “I see you are going on to Geneva from Paris sir?” she said, as she handed him back his ticket.

Both men looked at each other; for they had been told not to give away any information to anyone about where they were going after Paris. After all, they were sent abroad to kill an enemy of the virtual state on the orders of the head of the country: Mag the Monster.

"On no, just going to Paris," beamed Fusby.

An indignant Lance, bending forward growled at her: "Why do you say we are going onto Geneva for?"

"Because sir, the hotel Viret card is inside here along with the flight ticket. "It says you have a complimentary drink on arrival. She was shocked by the reaction of both men, but her training paid off and in a professional way she tried to be friendly: "That is very nice of them, don't you think, sir."

"It is," said a red faced Fusby.

"I know the hotel. It is the centre of Geneva; I haven't stayed there, *monsieur* but I know where it is."

Fusby now looked thoroughly embarrassed. Seeing this Lance, his sidekick, tried to cover up for him: "Fishing trip madam. We are men of the rods. We may end up there. Just a precautionary booking, you know, by the lakeside."

"Have your rods been checked in?"

"Oh no we hire them over there," Fusby interjected.

"You hire them over there - that is very interesting."

Fusby quickly added: “Oh, it is a great craze going on at the moment in Scotia, fishing abroad, madam.”

The Scotia airport worker beside her could not help but laugh: “I must tell my brother that. He loves fishing.. Now he can leave his rod at home the next time he heads over to Europe.”

Fusby gave Lance a nudge in the ribs, telling him not to engage her any further.

“Geneva is nice?”added the stewardess again wishing to send them on their way with best wishes.

There was a silence, which Fusby obviously did not like and he rushed to fill in the gap: “We are meeting friends in Paris. We will see how it all pans out.”

“Excuse me, I will have to check in this lady here. ”

Fusby turned round. He could see like everyone else she was an elderly lady, a rich foreign émigré, waiting to speak to the stewardess.

“My dear, I went to the wrong gate. Am I still in time?”

“It is fine madam, please let me process your ticket for you.”

“Oh thank you my dear. I was so worried I had missed the flight.”

There you go Madam have a nice flight,” the attractive French lady said calming her down “Your connecting flight to Nice, is on time.”

The French stewardess seeing her having trouble with her trolley case looked at her male colleague beside her indicating to him to help her with it onto the plane.

After Fusby and Lance had boarded the flight to Paris, the stewardess and local worker both smiled at each other. As the stewardess picked up her small bottle of water that she had brought with her to her place of work, she commented: “It says on the system here that Mr Fusby and Mr Lance are detectives.”

“Really, must be after some big fish,” quipped the assistant.

He then pushed the elderly woman’s trolly case towards the flight gate. “Come on my dear we will get you on and seated.”

“I like Paris, but prefer Nice,” beamed the elderly woman, as they went through the gate, “*au revoir* my dears.”

57

The instructions before heading for the airport, sent to the two virtual detectives were clear: 'Do not speak with anyone, a courier will approach you at the airport. Await further instructions.'

However, they were about to go on to the plane and no one had come forward thus far. Obviously, both detectives were on edge. Usually everything went as smooth as silk in the planning before they moved in on their target.

Unknown to Fusby and Lance, Mag the Monster had assigned an agent named Ms Minx

to speak with them on the plane. The idea was that before embarking on the mission, if they needed anything, the courier when she returned would see to that.

Of course, Fusby and Lance were assigned priority seats near the front of the aircraft, and both detectives were now ready to board the plane.

"But where is the agent?" mused Fusby aloud to himself.

Climbing up the stairs to the plane unfortunately a man who had been all morning inside a bar at the airport had an accident. It really was not surprising; for he was two sheets to the wind.

The tall fellow fell down the boarding stairs like a collapsible mannequin. He rolled here and there on the tarmac before sinking to the ground. However, being in a stupor, the only damage seemed to be that he had bashed his teeth against the rail before landing on the ground. Lucky for him he never felt a thing, but he did not look too good. This held up some of the passengers from boarding as the staff tried to clean him up.

It was Fusby and Lance who got the man upright. Fusby in his usual polite manner said to

him: “I see you have had an accident, sir. You can see a dentist sir when you get to Paris. The French, you know, have a wonderful health service.”

Then along with the others they all went up the boarding stairs again and on to the plane. As they walked along the passageway, Lance made a request to his boss due to his long legs. He moaned to himself, as they neared the front of the aircraft: “I need to take the isle seat.”

Fusby, ever the gentleman, smiled: “Yes, no problem Lance,” seeing an attractive lady would be sitting next to him at the window, “I can sit in the middle.”

As he sat down, Fusby could not help but notice how stylish she was. Not only that, she was wearing a short skirt and her legs were covered with expensive black tights, the kind models wear. He did not mind sitting beside her at all.

Was it the way she wore her dark fedora hat slightly tilted to the side, along with her matching designer sunglasses, that covered most of her face, that made her look mysterious. Indeed, she looked like something out of a detective novel.

As soon as they were up in the air, Fusby started to nod off. However, the elegant woman

next to him in the dark shades had a different idea. After about half an hour into the flight, she turned from gazing down onto the land through her dark shades she studied the little gnome next to her. Then, as she was trained to do, she gently moved her head towards his, and with a smile she blew hot air into his ear.

At first, Fusby smiled as if he was experiencing a sea breeze in his dreams lying on the beach somewhere on Greece or Italy with Dorothea his wife.

Seeing he was not going to rouse him from his slumber in a comical foreign English accent, that appears in every cheap detective novel, the woman in the black fedora hat said to him: "Mr Fusby you have got to go to the hotel Viret in Geneva and there you will find the Covenanter."

Fusby woke up immediately and stared at her, He noticed she was holding a photograph in her hand. Presently, it was passed to him.

"This is a picture of the target taken a few days ago. As you can see the Covenanter has changed his image. You will notice his hair style is different, and he has a beard now. My virtual research team informed me that he is trying to

look like somebody called John Knox," she suggested.

Lance seeing Fusby now engaged with the attractive woman next to him put two and two together, bent forward and said: "Yes that's him alright boss. He doesn't fool me with that middle ages look. Don't you worry madam we will soon pick the Covenanter up and deal with him."

Ms Minx, for that was her code name, could see that Lance was someone who always had to be led. She at once replied, as she handed over another picture to him gently, touching the groin of Fusby on the way.

"After you engage with him, you have to immediately return to base. There will be no need to send the cleaners in boys - now will there?"

"Absolutely not," replied Fusby, as if he was talking about a foreign law not to be interfered with.

"No one will know who he was, or where he came from," added Lance, this time in a low Glaschu tone.

Even though Fusby nodded at Lance, he thought he should confirm his partner's statement. In a strange upbeat tone, as he rolled about in his seat to get comfortable, Fusby

chirped: “Please do not worry madam everything will be dealt with. If we need any help, I will alert the h.q. back home.”

38

The way the woman codenamed Ms Minx looked at Fusby made Lance uneasy. Everyone knew that since his divorce, Lance was wary of women and their feline ways. ‘The serpent in the garden is haunting the boy inside him,’ was how an experienced officer put it to his mates back in the office. Now all the young and old virtual coppers in the virtual team remarked upon this especially young female cadets.

Knowing all of this, Fusby nudged his partner in the ribs, then he beamed goodheartedly to his fellow passenger: “Very good madam, be rest assured, there will be no problems.”

Presently, the commander turned to his detective partner Lance, and he stared at him warning him not to make any speeches about how good he was catching criminals and receiving awards from Mag the Monster who ran the virtual state back home.

Fusby may have been fussy about everything in life, but unlike his partner Lance he was always ready to engage with the opposite sex. And it was not out of character for him to keep chatting away the way he did with his fellow passenger. With women Fusby was always overbearing. Anyone overhearing him could see that.

Even someone who had never met him before could see he was treating the lady next to him on the plane as if she was the most virtuous woman in the world. And of course Fusby himself was indeed a well respected man - was he not.

“I usually go with the family to Greece on holiday, every year, of course short haul these days due to commitments,” he informed her smiling, as he changed the subject.

As Lance listened in he nodded and from then on sat quiet as a nun. He could see his partner Fusby had everything under control. Fusby he knew had more experience working as a virtual police officer abroad than he had.

Lance soon got bored with sitting there, and to occupy his time he started to scan all faces around him on the plane looking for any foreign agents on this flight.

They had been warned about their competitors, the French, before going. Of course, there were many agencies out there these days working for whoever paid them. Anyway, they were on their way now to deal with the Covenanter. The plan was in place to find Stan the Man and deal with him. Lance knew it was just a matter of biding their time before they got him. He could not see anyone of interest around him, so he sat back and stared ahead of him again.

The flight was quite short, under two hours. However, Fusby had forgotten to take his tablets for his irritable bowel syndrome. He was annoyed with himself. Unknown to him, when they came aboard Ms Minx had arranged with the young

stewardess, who was on the virtual police payroll, to keep an eye on them.

Ms Minx had instructed the young lady that they were both bad flyers and to slip something in their drinks. “To be on the safe side,” as she put it to her contact.

Lance and Fusby enjoyed their free cup of tea and due to what was in the plastic cups they both fell sound asleep. It was such a lovely picture too for the passengers to look at, as they passed them by going up to the toilet, near the cockpit. The two detectives heads resting together, one on the shoulder and the other on the other’s head. They looked as if in life they would never be apart.

Although Fusby and Lance were completely opposites the one thing they did share was that they both took off their shoes when up in the air. Unfortunately, Fusby had smelly feet, Lance did not like that. This was not a problem at the moment though due to the powder put in their tea.

As the plane made its way across the channel, Fusby snored contentedly, and Lance sometimes moved his long neck ever so gently as if caressing the shoulder he was lying on.

As was her instruction, the same young stewardess, who had mixed their tea with a sedative, came by to wake them up when they were just about to land.

"Fasten your seat belt sir." she said nudging Lance: "We will be landing soon."

Lance woke up immediately, as if to confront a foreign agent. "What's that? Who is on the land..."

"Coming in now, sir,"

"I see," said the virtual cop coming to his senses.

Fusby was mortified that he had slept on his colleague's shoulder. Although, he was always jolly, Fusby had a great dislike of human contact. He was annoyed too that he had fallen asleep. It was quite the reverse for his partner. Lance may have been anti social, but that was deceptive for given the chance he liked human contact, especially touches and hugs.

Though these days he got little in the way of that kind of thing; it was just a memory for him now in his virtual life as a virtual cop. Human contact reminded him not only of better days with his wife, but male bonding in the days when

he and his colleagues used to go out socialising together.

To show his reserved manner Fusby, as the air stewardess walked away back down the isle, looked over at Ms Minx sitting there next to him in her fedora hat.

Remembering who she was, he then turned the other way and whispered his instructions to his colleague: "Now, remember Lance, when we get to the hotel, I want you to hang around the bar. We know the Covenanter likes to work on his computer in view of others. We expect him to be hanging around the bar and the restaurant and lounge area. We also know he does not carry a mobile phone with him, and his computer is always offline. Just to be on the safe side, we had better put a tracker on him. When he comes down to the reception area in the hotel, you can go up to his room," there was a theatrical pause before he followed up with a question: "You have the skeleton key with you?"

"Yes," said Lance in a undertone, "I have got it here boss," and he fumbled in his trouser pocket to confirm all was well.

"Right, when you get the chance get into his room and put some radio active dust on his

jacket, then we can trace his movements thereafter throughout the city of Geneva."

Lance asked indignantly. "The forecast says, when we get there, it is to be warm. What if he has not got a jacket with him ?"

"Well, whatever he is wearing find it and dust it down with the magic stuff," said Fusby annoyed making one or two passengers turn round and look at him.

"Right boss."

"Don't fuss Lance, just apply it."

"How are we getting a hold of the magic stuff?" asked Lance leaning over to look again at the woman by the window.

"I believe it will be delivered to the hotel after we arrive by our French connection Monsieur Castellio."

Just at that moment, Fusby and Lance both bent forward like synchronized swimmers as the plane came into land, and as it thundered along the runway they both then sat back and looked at the ceiling.

As the engines roared, Fusby continued: "The courier will arrive at the hotel not long after we check in. You go down and meet him. I believe it

will be inside a Champagne bottle. Take it to the room, do not open it until we are ready to move."

"Got it, boss."

It was at times like this that Lance felt extremely close to Fusby, after all he had been his partner and crime now for over a year in the virtual police department. Both men shared the same lifestyle put forward by Mag the Monster.

Previously, they had both been traditional coppers up until their force had gone virtual with the arrival of the VP party. Not long after they became virtual policemen it was Fusby who uncovered 'the Stephen Deacon affair,' and this made them famous in the capital. Thereafter, came the case about the man who came to the capital from Nigeria and setup a massive illegal money laundering scam. When the story broke after Fusby and his partner Lance captured the man, it went viral.

In fact, it made the national news and overnight both of them became celebrities. The crooks operating from a library in the city centre, were conning elderly citizens out of their savings: "They are no longer active thanks to Fusby and Lance," that is how the press put it.

The man had been targeting high profile citizens as well as old ladies, and tricking them into transferring their savings into other accounts. However, little Fusby and long legged Lance, as they were affectionately described by well wishers, tracked them down and brought them all to justice.

Mag the Monster was over the moon; for apart from the Stephen Deacon affair this was her first big success when she became the First minister in the land of Scotia.

38

After the drive from the airport by taxi, the two virtual detectives checked into the Hotel Viret. It was just off the main road not far from the train station. Standing inside the eighteen century building, in the old town of Geneva, the two virtual detectives looked around them.

In his cultured polite voice, Fusby introduced himself to the Swiss receptionist. In a super prissy efficient voice he ejaculated: “Good afternoon madam. My name is Mr Fusby, and this is my colleague here Mr Lance. We have reserved two separate single rooms for two nights.”

The young lady looked down at the small fat man, then up at the tall thin man beside him. She had never heard a voice like that before; it was sweet, cultured, erudite, commanding, and diplomatic, all rolled into one. The only problem was - it was anything but natural.

The receptionist, dressed in all black, and, unlike the French stewardess at the airport she was not very talkative.

As cool as a mountain stream, in her perfect English, she responded quietly: "I see, sir, just a moment, please," and she checked her laptop computer on her desk. After she had gathered the details from the hotel system she looked at the calendar on the wall before speaking. In a firmer tone than the one before, she responded: "Mr Fusby we sent you an email yesterday; for we have had a problem with this booking. Did you not receive it?"

"Problem," scowled Lance, who bent forward to interrogate her.

"Yes, sir," she said startled, and stared at the humourless face of the newly arrived guest: "We have only one room available with one double bed in it, sir."

Both men looked at each other and, at the same time exclaimed: “Double bed!”

“I am sorry sir. We did confirm this late afternoon with you yesterday by email.”

“I never received it,” said Fusby, this time not in his usual super efficient way.

In his old copper manner, Lance kept staring at her as it to convict the receptionist before she reached her next sentence. The young smart receptionist felt the intrusion and thus avoided his gaze. She searched her computer again to try and find more information to affirm the new position to the newly arrived guests.

“Ah, here we are here. Yes, we had a problem with an artist staying with us. How do you say in English; he had a bad temperament. He broke up the furniture and we have not received two new single beds to replace them yet.”

It was all very odd; both men had never heard of such a thing. The other thing that annoyed them was that it was a small reception area for such a large hotel. This they could see was due to the fact they had given maximum space to the dining room that had a lounge next to it.

Lance paced up and down the small area. One or two guests, who were leaving looked over

at the agitated man, before quickly hurrying by him.

Fusby noticed that Lance was about to press the nuclear button. He knew this sign all too well. He could see his old detective partner was indeed preparing to interrogate her, up against the wall so to speak.

Due to Fusby and Lance having been in the virtual team the longest, they knew officers collected funny stories about their mates who had been sent on assignments together. They usually posted them online: funny comments followed by pictures. Of course, they did this behind their colleagues backs.

Lance was obviously afraid that there was a story in the making about him and his boss. He could almost read the headline: Fusby and Lance share a double bed in Geneva.

It was viral stuff - was it not. Lance more than most was pre occupied about his own image. The lads could be quite bitchy in the virtual office. Although he got on like a house on fire with Fusby - sleeping in the same bed - well that was not on. Not for men of their age, or any age for that matter.

Lance finally got some words out: “What if one of us suffers from claustrophobia,” he blazed.

This complaint of two men in a single room did not take the young Swiss receptionist by surprise in the least. She replied calmly: “You can open the window, sir.”

Lance remembered the case of the two theatrical coppers, as they were called on line. He turned to his boss and said under his breath: “It is not on boss. We will end up like Elton and Miles?”

The story of Elton and Miles, was interesting. The story of two theatrical coppers was as they say legendary. It happened after they had been assigned to a case abroad to follow a show business star named Simon Shine. Apparently, apart from being a well known rapper, he was a tax dodger. It was rip roaring stuff; for the coppers fell in love with each other after having been sent to the far east to tail him. What had happened was they had to share some queer places to stay in, as they tracked the rapper from city to city. Their instructions were to follow him and bring him back to Scotia. It was well known in the office that the two young virtual coppers were two young men who were let’s say naive

about the ways of the world. Nevertheless, when they came back they declared openly to everyone in the virtual office that they were now a couple and not only that were getting married. Lance knew how daft it could all get when passion got the better of the young officers.

"And you like opera don't you?" muttered Lance to himself.

Fusby stared at him: "Opera. What are you talking about Lance?"

Lance panicked: "I once heard you singing in the bath when I was outside your door waiting for you."

"Yes, I like Opera, but what has that got to do with staying here.."

"Boss what would they say in the virtual office if they heard that you and I, after being assigned to follow the well known Covenanter, had shared the same bed in Geneva?

"Don't talk rubbish Lance."

"Still you never know," muttered Lance, obviously thinking about his mates back home.

"What was that sir. You want to say hello to someone back home?" asked the receptionist

"Can't you move someone else," asked Lance in a deep masculine Glaschu accent.

“No, it’s fine,” Fusby tried to joke.

“You know the kind of things they post online boss. You will remember what they said about Elton and Miles, the time they were working on the Simon Shine case - and you fart a lot,” Lance muttered to himself, as he turned away.

Quite intrigued by the two characters, the reception stared at the two foreign men for a few moments. Of course, she knew in these virtual days everything went on under the sun, as they say. Many people were odd who, living or working, in the virtual world and nothing much was said about them.

Only brave people posted things about others online now; it was an no longer an every day occurrence. This was due to the virtual employment act. Every lifestyle was permitted at work and in the home.

The receptionist could also see that the two guests Mr Fusby and Mr Lance were in a quandary what to do.

“Do you not have another room,” ejaculated Lance, as if prompted to do so by a careful demon.

Fusby tried to help by saying: “Mr Lance snores.”

This was true it was put online by a virtual colleague after a trip Fusby and Lance made to London. The two detectives on that occasion had been sent there to bolster their colleagues on a demonstration at Trafalgar Square, against the virtual laws when the legislation came out at first. This may have been early on in their career, but it was still damning.

It was obvious to the receptionist just by looking at him that Mr Lance in a strange way was close to Mr Fusby . She could also see that he was under his control, if not his command.

However, for some reason it was plain to see Lance was not looking forward to staying in this hotel with him tonight. When Lance was uneasy he had a habit of rubbing his right shiny Oxford shoe onto his left calf, as if to polish the toe of it even more.

Fusby of course knew this was a sign he was clearly on edge. He looked at him again trying to figure out what to say that would calm him down.

Even though Lance did not fancy sharing a double bed with his partner in crime, little Fusby made a joke of it. He turned to the young receptionist, smiled and quipped: “Mr Lance’s long legs may be too big for the double bed.”

That got a laugh and Lance who was a professional cop pulled himself together. He understood that he had been given a fate accompli. Fusby got back into character too. He was always positive; he accepted the circumstances. Fusby smiled at the receptionist, and in the manner of a true leader he once more made fun of their predicament: “Yes, Inspector Lance you will have to sleep on the floor tonight - there is nothing else for it.”

Lance too by this time knew he had little choice. After all, there was a major cycle event in the city this week. Every room had been taken, that was the last update from the virtual office bank home after he had reported to them.

18

As soon as they entered the room allocated to them on the fourth floor, Lance checked to see if there were any hidden cameras in it. As his training had taught him, he shut the curtains, took out of his pocket the small touch-like device he always liked to carry.

It was well known in the virtual world that beams of light gave away secret cams from their hidden positions. All the virtual cops under Inspector Fusby knew the places their advisories liked to hide their devices: inside shower heads,

air conditioning units, flat screen televisions and radios sets. It was not only obligatory now for all virtual officers to have this sacking device on them, but for all those working for the virtual state.

Everyone these days had to go on courses to learn about how to make an area safe from microphones and secret cameras, before connecting to the virtual world. As soon as a virtual cop walked into a room, it was standard practice to 'do a sweep' as they call it and eliminate any hidden devices.

However, it was a standing joke the way Lance moved about in the dark when he was checking for cams. It was the way he stared around him that made him a target for fun in the office. They said he was like a man walking on eggs. "Just doing a quick check, boss," he muttered to himself.

Presently, he went into the toilet inside the hotel room, with his little sensor device in his hand, pointing it at the wall as if looking for an alien hiding somewhere. Then back out into the small bedroom he came looking not this time for an interloper, but for the devil himself.

The other thing doing the rounds at the moment, inside the virtual police office, was the story that Lance felt that his neighbour through the wall was spying on him.

To combat this he had setup microphones on his side, adjoining his neighbour's property. 'It is not so much what your neighbour is up to these days, but what they are not up to," was the motto of some of the younger cops in the virtual office.

Due to increased technology and the ease of access to it there were many who spied on others in the time of the virtual parliament. Some did it for the money, others for foreign governments, and some just for fun. It was a fairly profitable occupation; for there were agencies all over the world who would pay for this kind of data.

Snooping was big business in the virtual world. All over the world data collection was going on in an industrial scale. Indeed profiling the individual citizen was something that happened every day inside the virtual world.

Their hotel room was quite small even for a single occupancy, and the double bed in it made it look even smaller than it actually was. This was of course due to the fact that the room had hastily been rearranged after the crazy artist had broken

it up. The receptionist had told them before they headed to their room what had been reported on national news and all the major Internet news sites. Lance of course checked this out:

"Boss, I see the temperamental artist, who broke up his room, has offered to pay for the damage. His next court appearance is at the end of the week."

Fusby was not interested in any of that. However, he knew better not to interrupt Lance as he paraded around the room with his small device in his hand. The look on his face showed an intense feeling intertwined by the effect the toxic pills he was taking to stabilise his nerves effected him.

It was the way it was, when Lance got hyper, Fusby relaxed. The little corporal lay down on the bed and stretched himself out, yawned, then said: "Well, Lance once we get this job done we can head back up the road. I am really looking forward to a nice meal at the weekend with my wife Dorothea. There is a new restaurant in town. I have been keeping an eye on it. It has been getting good reviews. We have asked our old friend in the clergy out for a meal. That could be the place to take her, you know"

Then, as if being prodded by a loose bed spring activated from an unknown source below him, he sat up and ruminated: “Lance, you had best keep an eye on things. You know what the French and Swiss are like. They are notorious for taking the mickey out of the Brits. They can get up to all kinds of nonsense when they see Brits on a case abroad.”

“Just completed the first sweep boss - nothing found.”

“That’s fine Lance.”

82

That evening the two Virtual detectives after they changed got ready to head across the road for something to eat. Fusby, always had an eye on his belly.

It was no surprise to Lance when they arrived, Fusby noticed an eatery across the road from the hotel. He suggested to him: “Let’s pop in to that place opposite the hotel, and have something nice to eat and drink and plan on how to deal with the Covenanter,” is how he put it.

It had been confirmed by h.q. back at base that the target was indeed staying at the hotel Viret. As soon as they got that information, the virtual team hacked the register of the hotel. Even though they could not see him on their cam system, it was suspected that he was still using it as a base.

At precisely 8pm European time the two odd detectives from the virtual police of Scotia walked across the street from their hotel in search of something to eat.

Presently, they both stopped and looked in through the window of the Sebastian Castellio restaurant to see what it looked like. With great interest, Fusby read the menu in the window, and after that he took note of what looked like a stage over to the right not far from the restaurant.

"It certainly looks a nice place to spend an evening.," he commented.

"It has got a strange name boss has it not the Castellio."

"Oh, it will be fine Lance. Come on, let's get to the bar before we head for a nice meal at the restaurant," was the way Fusby convinced him.

"I overheard people talking about it back at the hotel," moaned Lance ever the sceptic, "One

woman said that it was a theatrical crowd that frequented this place," he paused before adding in a worried tone: "Whatever that means."

"Yes, very interesting indeed," said Fusby, holding the door open for his partner.

"You go on boss. I will case the joint just in case any foreign agents are hanging about outside."

When Lance came back from his recce, he found Fusby at the bar waiting to be served. Up close he whispered furtively to him: "Everything out there is A-okay, boss."

Not long after this they got served and from the long rosewood bar they took their drinks in hand and looked for somewhere to sit down. Always on the lookout, Lance noticed that a singer had just got up on the small stage, and she was just about to do her first number.

"I see there is entertainment on the way, boss," Lance whispered in a tone, as if the mafia were running this joint: "I see two seats over there."

Without any introduction, the South American looking woman started to sing a French song *Les enfants du Pirée - Paroles*.

Hearing the live sound, Fusby smiled, looked around himself, then said: "Very good Lance. Yes, let's sit there, then we will head for the restaurant and something to eat." And as they walked away from the bar, he added in a low tone: "Of course, the French know we are here, but they do not know what we have come to do."

"It is a good place over there to talk, not far from the stage, next to the speaker," confirmed Lance out of the side of his mouth, "The loud music will mask our voices."

"Excellent, Lance."

Lance who had more experience than Fusby when it came to operating in the field abroad pondered for a moment, as they both looked around them.

"Yes, I think that table over there should do nicely," commented Fusby, "Not a word will be picked up if any of our friend's are hanging around. Okay, let's head there and we can plan on how we are going to deal with the Covenanter."

The singer was well into her song by this time, halfway through a French song name, it was plain to see from the way she glanced at the two Britishers who had arrived, she was intrigued by them. The singer was no doubt wondering where

they came from and what they were doing in the city where she worked. However, like everyone else in the club she knew no one ever sat at that table directly in front of the right hand speaker.

Even after she finished her song she looked over at the two virtual detectives. Just by looking at her face anyone in the audience could tell she loved theatre, night life and all that goes with what they call life on the road.

The singer smiled to herself as if acknowledging her own wicked sense of humour, lifestyle and preoccupation with her ultimate gaol, yet to be achieved: stardom. In a casual manner she sidled along to the small mixing desk, that was just out of sight behind some crates of beer, and there she cranked up the volume on the left hand speaker.

As she walked back to the microphone stand, she gave a wink to the barman and uttered an encouraging word to herself, saying: "Mon cheri."

Now fighting against the loud love song, sang by the singer, the two virtual detectives got interrupted time and time again on how to terminate Stan the Man. Eventually, Fusby and Lance thought they had better stop the discussion, and move on to an easier topic. They continued

to shout at each other: “How much should we put in as regards expenses Fusby?” roared Lance, “I personally think 2k is fair.”

However, Fusby was obviously thinking about what they should have to eat once they had moved away from this bar area.

Still thinking about the dastardly plan why they were here, Lance kept staring at Fusby as if looking for instructions as to the direction that they should go in. The music was too loud and Fusby did not contribute much in the way of detail anymore: “2k is about right - just do that Lance, everything will be fine, ” he mined to his deputy as the singer on stage kept belting out her song.

It probably was due to the fact they were not only sharing the same room, but the same bed that the two detectives had far too much to eat and drink that night at the Sebastian Castellio.

Just before midnight the two virtual detectives rolled home, with their ears humming and their bellies full of beer, not to mention chicken curry, hot apple pie, coffee and cake.

It was half way through the night, Lance seeing Fusby’s half naked fat body move closer to him, on his side of the double bed, that he

sobered up. There was no real threat; for Fusby looked so happy. Lance relaxed. It was obvious to him that his partner in crime was in some virtual dreamland having cocktails in some fancy restaurant he liked to go to, no doubt with his wife Dorothea.

There was only one other incident during the night. This happened when Fusby let one go. Lance had to escape to the window and hang out of it before crawling back to bed half an hour later.

19

At precisely 7 am, the next morning the phone above the double bed rang out. The way Fusby groaned, it sounded like an alarm itself. Who was calling him at this time in the morning? Fusby stretched his arm from under the covers and picked up the receiver off the wall: "Good morning. Inspector Fusby," he croaked, as if back in his virtual office.

"Reception here, sir. I take it you and Mr Lance had a good night's rest."

"Yes, we did…"

“There is a man here with a magnum of Champagne for you. He says he cannot wait long and that you must come down right away so that he can hand it over to you. Will I tell him to wait at reception until you come down, or should I ask him to come back, sir?”

“Fusby covered the wall phone with his hand: “Quick Lance,” he kicked him under the covers, “Get dressed and get down to reception!”

“Lance moaned, then winced: “Reception, right boss.”

“Thank you receptionist, someone will be down in five minutes.”

“Very good, sir. I will tell the gentleman to wait.”

Even though he had a hangover long legged Ed Lance was out of bed and standing there with his trousers on for his commander to address.

Fusby did just that. He sat up in bed took a deep breath and then instructed his deputy: “You know the drill, Lance, act natural - not too friendly. Thank him and bring the bottle back up to the room with you.”

Lance, as he hurried into the rest of his clothes kept one eye on Fusby, still in bed, just in case he was going to addition something else that

he had missed that was important. He could see like him his boss too had a hangover. Fusby was always cheery, but he knew when he had been drinking he became irritable. Going hell for leather now, Lance's big long legs hurried to use the toilet before the wee man got out of bed.

When he came out of the bathroom, Fusby still sitting up in bed, cleared his throat, coughed, before reminding his deputy: "Now remember Lance, ask what the weather like in London, if he says it seldom rains there take the parcel from him, give him some money, and bring the magic dust up to the room here. Don't speak to anyone on the way or on the return."

"Ok, boss."

As he watched his accomplice disappear out of the bedroom door: "I wonder who they have used as a courier?" Fusby pondered to himself.

Two minutes later down at reception the following dialogue took place.

"Monsieur, this is Mr Lance."

Lance looked at the receptionist. It was the same young lady who had signed them in yesterday. Today she was dressed in a two piece black suit with a lovely colourful silk scarf to addition some style to her demeanour. She

seemed to understand him in a way he could not fathom out.

Lance looked over from her to where there were some seats for guests. The jolly John was sitting there. Lance could see he was a small man; the usual nondescript type used by the virtual police in Europe.

As soon as the courier set eyes on the tall fellow, he got up from the seat and walked across the short way to the reception desk to meet him. As he handed the parcel over, he said in a heavy French-English accent: "I have here your order, sir. One magnum of champagne, to be delivered to Mr Fusby or Mr Lance" and with that said he handed it over to the big chap standing in front of him.

Lance was a third rate actor, but nevertheless he tried to smile and acknowledge the meeting was in order. He could see the man was wanting to go and for that reason he did not offer him any money.

In fact, he did not engage with him any further. The courier did not hang about; he was out of the hotel door, on his way down the main street. Lance turned round and went back into the lift, It took a few moments to arrive. When it

arrived, he pressed floor number four and went back up to his room.

Entering the room, Lance could see Fusby was still in his underwear having just finished washing. In the bathroom mirror, his boss could see Lance too reflected standing in front of the long mirror fitted onto the wardrobe.

"Received the goods boss," said Lance cradling the magnum bottle like an infant child.

His boss however seemed uninterested in the drop. Fusby was applying expensive aftershave to his face with gentle taps here and there. Staring at his red face in the mirror: "Very good, Lance," he responded: "We will go down now and have breakfast. You had better get washed and shaved too."

"Quick as I can, boss."

“Breakfast is through the door on your right, gentlemen,” said the smart receptionist, seeing the two odd balls come out of the lift

“Thank you very much madam,” replied Fusby in his polite west coast of Scotia accent, “I am really looking forward to a good hearty breakfast, indeed.”

Lance thought he had better say something too. He asked in his usual gruff way: “What time’s the last sittin’, dear?”

“Last sittin’,” the reception repeated wondering if she had done something wrong. Then it twigged on her what he was asking: “Oh, that will be 10:30 am, sir.”

The breakfast was not to their liking; for it was what they call continental. After they had their Muesli, fruit and coffee, the two virtual detectives sat and looked at each other across the table like relatives that had run out of things to say to each other.

If truth be told, the two virtual detectives had ran out of natural conversation a long time ago. If it were not about work, or what their virtual leader was up to, they really had nothing much in common.

It was a large table they were sitting at next to the window. The view was pleasant though and the street outside looked interesting. They both stared through the poplar trees to glean what they could from whatever commerce was going on in this residential area.

Turning back from looking across the road at the eatery where they had been to last night, Fusby whispered: “What did you do with the Champagne, Lance?

“I put it in the wardrobe.”

“Good.

“What do we do now.?

“We just wait.”

“Wait?”

“Yes, we just wait.”

“Then what?”

“When Stan the Man appears down at the reception area, or sits over there in the lounge area, you get into his room and plant the magic stuff on his clothes. We know from his profile he likes to work on his tablet near to a window, and write down his thoughts about this new confession of faith, as he calls it.”

“Very good, boss. I will keep my eye on things and let you know when he appears,” Lance responded as if knowing what to do: “But, what if he recognise us?”

Fusby with a glint in his eye smiled, then after a moment he effused: “That will do no harm. Don’t worry about that, just get into his room and plant the active material wherever you can. You have your glove with you?”

“Got it boss.”

“If there is a jacket handy in his wardrobe then throw some stuff on it. If that does not work go through his things and put the magic dust on

his underwear, on his socks. I am sure he changes every day, or if he has a coat then apply it to that garment too. And if all fails, when you pass him by on the stairs sprinkle some on his back."

"Yes, it is cold enough for a coat," replied Lance looking outside once again onto the Swiss street.

The two virtual detectives just at that moment got Intel on their phones that Stan the Man had been seen in a restaurant nearby. It went on to say that another man was with him, and that the target had not returned to the hotel since checking in on Monday.

The hotel had a friendly atmosphere; the detectives could see that; it was quite intimate. The guests sitting for breakfast were at ease in their surroundings.

Even though this hotel was hospitable, it was plain to see Stan, for whatever reason did not want to be there and chat with residents, due to the fact he had escaped the virtual police back home. It was obvious they were now looking for him all over Europe. Indeed, Stan was well aware that they wanted to apply their nonsensical virtual laws on him.

It was definitely a bit of luck they got when the two virtual detectives, as they both stood waiting for the lift to take them back up to the room, Fusby overheard the receptionist say on the phone to a caller. "That is correct. The man in room 34 has indicated to us he will be back sometime tomorrow. Apparently, he is being shown round the city and is staying with church friends. There is no problem with the booking the client has paid his bill up until the end of the month. You can look in the room, but you don't have to clean it every day. Just see everything is in order…"

Fusby on hearing the receptionist he gave out instruction right away: "Go to his room Lance, now."

"Leave it to me chief," and like a shot they both got into the lift.

Lance knew where Stan the Man's room was situated on the third floor. As if it were a piece of gold, he took the skeleton key that he had hidden inside his jacket pocket, smiled at Fusby, as he pressed the relevant button to take them to the third floor: "Leave it to me boss. I will deal with it," he confirmed, as the doors shut.

Little did he know that the owner of the hotel, Mr Zwingli, was also helping the White church as well as others on the run from the tentacles of the virtual police. The owner had been approached by one of the White church members many years ago, and not long after that he joined them.

This was at the time when the new hate law bill came in to force all over Europe, and all citizens had to watch what they were saying. "The state are recording what you say," is how Mag the Monster put it in the virtual parliament. "Any indiscretion will be punished by the full force of the law by the virtual courts. Don't think you can escape us. We have virtual friends abroad, if you are thinking of going there."

Unknown to Lance, Stan the Man had managed to asked the workers to keep an eye on Stan's room.

Not faraway, from a house opposite, a friend from the White church was monitoring it for him. The friend knew that Stan was on the other side of town working away on the New Covenant document to save Scotia from becoming a virtual nation. As soon as she saw a tall fellow enter his room, he alerted Stan the Man: "Do you know a

big tall thin chap for he is moving about inside your bedroom?"

Stan had a look at the picture that she sent to him. The White church member, the cleaning lady from Bosnia, who looked in to Stan's room was also perplexed: "Who is this strange figure in room 34? And what is he putting on your jacket, coat, underwear? And why was he wearing a rubber glove?" wondered the woman on the phone to Stan.

Just then, the lanky fellow in the room phoned someone in the UK, and every word he spoke was heard by a man monitoring the hotel room for Stan the Man in the adjoining room.

'Ok, Boss. The magic dust has been applied. We have got him now. As soon as the Covenanter comes back we will be able to find out where he goes to, night and day. We will then be able to update the office about his movements, before we decide to move in on him."

97

That morning, as he was working away on the new Confession of faith to save the land of Scotia, Stan got a report from his contact again in the White church as to what was happening and what was said by the Lanky fellow on his mobile phone. It was reported to him that the tall lanky fellow was onto someone back in Scotia. The caller finished up by saying: “He is now a dead man walking.”

Stan got confirmation of this when a note was handed to him that morning in the cafe bar by a

courier passing by. It read: 'virtual detectives now using an app to align your whereabouts? Magic dust has been out on all your clothes in the room.'

After handing over the note the courier, an older man from Italy, said to him: "My friend, I know someone who is a good stand in for you."

It was well know that the chef who went by the name of Jacopo Sadeleto was a snitch for the virtual police. Although in this area the virtual police were rarely seen, they used Straw Men as they were called to find out what was going on.

That night over their evening meal inside the hotel, Fusby studied the app long and hard along with his sidekick inspector Lance. As they both peered at their devices, they could not help but wonder why the Covenanter was going to the synagogue in the centre of town of Geneva in the afternoon, and why he went fishing late at night in the lake?

When they were both in bed. Fusby before turning over yawed and said as if in a dream: "He really is a weird character, you know, I mean who fishes at midnight…"

"Queer hawk," groaned Lance with a long leer over his shoulder at the little gnome next to him.

“If he goes their again tomorrow night, Lance, I think we will pay him a visit. What do you think?”

“Agreed boss,” said Lance who smirked the way he always did when dealing with criminals. “Tomorrow night, sounds about right.”

Like all criminals, it was as if what was coming to him he deserved. Lance loved the word ‘criminal’. There was nothing better in life than convicting a citizen that he was a criminal. It didn’t matter if he was guilty or not. Lance was well known for saying this to the younger cops after a judge pronounced sentence on a citizen. However, the younger cops in the virtual office always laughed at him, behind his back: “That’s another one that will be haunting Lance until he dies.”

Lance, as he lay beside his chief in the double bed, wanted to affirm the plan he had in mind. He was about to launch into a monologue about how it should be done. However, to be concise, he tried to be funny: “Yes, the lake is the place for him, all right.”

“Get some sleep, Lance.”

Lance was too excited to do that and was not for sleeping. He decided to check his app again to see

where the target was: “Yeah, he is there all right, boss, by the lake, and it is well past midnight too. We have got him covered. He must be meeting a contact there. It is to be a moonless night tomorrow night. I will creep up behind him…”

Lance heard nothing back in reply to what he had said; for the wee gnome next to him was sound asleep.

The next morning downstairs at breakfast, the two virtual detectives went over the plan again and again, and it was only after doing this and after checking the data sent from h.q. that they started to relax.

“So the Covenanter met someone at midnight did he?” asked Fusby, who pointed with his finger at Lance’s device.

“He did boss. I saw it on the app.”

In his usual cultivated way, when everything had been considered Fusby gave Lance his final instructions: “Right, we will take this path here, you see it on the map, and this will lead us to him. If he is with someone tonight by the lake, we will wait until his contact is gone. Then you can introduce yourself to him.”

Lance champing at the bit to get going of course agreed with every word: “Yes, I will deal with him boss, don’t you worry about that.”

Fusby was upbeat too about the venture, but he tried to calm his partner down by lowering the tone of his voice: “That’s fine Lance. I will make a full report out and send it to h.q. before we execute the plan tonight. I am sure they will approve it.”

The two virtual detectives laid low for the rest of the day, then just before midnight the two odd balls from room 44, on the fourth floor, slowly and stealthily made there way down the stairs, past reception, and out onto the deserted street. As planned they got into their hired car and went along the main road towards the lake.

They both knew where he fished at night due to the tracking device placed on him. It was not far from the end of the road near the boulevard. They knew the path was short towards the lake.

As they looped round before coming out at the lake, it may not have been that far from the centre, but the one way system made it seem longer. Due to this they got a little nervous. As was their training, they had both put on dark clothes hats and scarves to hide their identity.

Lance, as his training had taught him, had changed the number plates of the hired car in the afternoon in the garage under the hotel.

When they reached the lakeside, Lance parked the car a good bit away. This annoyed Fusby; for that meant he had to walk, or in his case waddle, to where the target was fishing.

He whispered under his breath quite annoyed, as they made their way down the lane towards the target: "Are you sure we will find the car on the way back,"

With a huge daft grin on his long face, Lance euphoric now brought out the latest mobile smart phone and pointed a long forefinger at it: "Sorted boss."

And right enough there at the lakeside down the lane they could see a man a good distance away happily fishing, under a rainbow umbrella, sitting on a little portable stool. The scene looked quite surreal under a cold clear sky above.

"That's him," whispered Lance checking the app on his phone.

"Are you sure it is the Covenanter?" asked Fusby with a polite nod.

“It is him all right, boss. The app has traced the radio active material on his jacket; it has worked a treat,” again whispered Lance.

“Very good, Lance. You know what to do. Now that he is on his own quietly fishing.”

“Yea, I will just go over and introduce myself to him, see if he wants to go for a swim.”

“Good thinking - don’t make too much of a noise now.”

As it happened there was a nice piece of driftwood at the end of the lane that led to the lakeside. Lance picked it up and without further ado dashed forward and smashed the man on the beach over the head with it. It was only a short distance across the stones and it was all over in no time at all. The man in the little stool groaned, then fell to the ground. Lance snorted the way he usually did after he had thundered down on his prey. The broken log was duly despatched into the lake. The Covenanting man would duly follow it.

Fusby asked as soon as he reach the scene: “Everything all right, Lance.”

“Got him boss.” blazed his deputy joyfully.

It may have been dark, but when Lance turned the fisherman over and took off his plant

pot hat, that for some inexplicable reason was still on his head, they both got a huge surprise.

"Jacopo Sadeleto, what is he doing here!" cried Lance.

Just at that moment a car pulled up near the lane to drop someone off at the hotel. Happy voices could be heard saying goodbye to each other. When the two virtual detectives heard the midnight greeting, they knew that had both better scamper. They did this along the stretch towards the nearest hotel; for it had an exit to the street there. They obviously did not want to be seen near the man laying out cold on the beach.

"Someone must have switched his clothes in his wardrobe," said a white faced Lance, as they ran.

"Let's get out of here," cried Fusby, who was quite out of breath already.

The two detectives hurried away from the crime scene, up the adjoining lane, halfway along the main road to where their car was parked.

19

The next morning Fusby and Lance were up early; it was not surprising they both had hardly slept; they could see the other was tired. As if awakening from a bad dream, they looked at each other but said nothing. There worried faces and frowns told they were both shaken to the core.

Fusby could still not believe what he had witnessed the evening before. He managed to get some words out: “I mean what was the chef of the hotel doing fishing at midnight on the lake?”

Lance shook his uncompromising head and answered back like a child after being reprimanded: “Don’t know boss.”

“Why did he have on Stan’s overcoat on?”

“He must have borrowed it.”

They could not understand how this had all come about. It was obvious by now that their target was in fact staying elsewhere, even though his name was still on the hotel register.

The last report they got back from h.q. was that although he was staying with a friend from the White church he was visiting the hotel to pick up things. but they had not be able to pin point his movements; for he carried with him no electronic devices. He was obviously in disguise avoiding the local virtual agents.

Fusby sent another report back to headquarters not long after this for them to look at. Lance that morning received a report from h.q. that a local snitch had heard in the chatter, two strange gentlemen who had come to stay not long after that the Covenanter, had left the hotel Viret.

Someone in the virtual police office intercepted a phone call made by someone

saying: 'Please drop off messages with the street seller for our friend."

Fusby and Lance knew Stan was always on outreach for the White church. They were sure he was living on the outskirts of Geneva somewhere. Further reports came in that the chef who was on the payroll of the virtual police, who had been knocked out.

This happened after instructions were sent to him to go to meet the Covenanter on the beach at midnight. It was also noted that he was not only on the payroll of the local police, but also a local gangster too.

Completely nonplussed, Lance moaned: "Someone must have told him to wait for him at the lakeside to receive information about something or other. I got a report, boss, that the chef Sadeleto slept in Stan's room when he had had too much to drink and did not want to go home. That is where he must have got the coat from."

The two virtual detectives came to the obvious conclusion that the chef must have been told to meet someone that night and borrowed Stan's coat.

Presently they got another report from h.q. that confirmed the interrupted phone call. The morning before the chef got a call from someone (unknown) that he had to go to the lakeside and there await further instructions.

He apparently was advised to put on a coat for it would be cold that night. Thereafter, he would be joined there by another fisherman, the Covenanter. He would pass money to him for his friend. This was to be deposited in the bank through the local mafia guy to pick up. The chef would get his cut when he returned to the hotel.

Later it was explained to the man, who took away the bedsheets for cleaning, by the receptionist, that the chef had gone to sleep in Stan's room in the afternoon. Hence the coat with the radio active dust on his back, on the fateful night, when he was attacked. Another call was intercepted and relayed to Fusby and Lance, but nothing came of it except that the chef was recovering in hospital.

The staff were now a little more relaxed about what had happened, and Lance overheard a joke in the lift that confirmed this: "Unfortunately, Jacopo' picked the wrong right night to go fishing."

“That man obviously knew the chef was a keen fisher man and a friend of the local mafia guy,” Lance whispered to Fusby as they came out of the list.

“Did you have a nice sleep, Gentlemen,” asked the young French receptionist.

Lance looked at her and then at Fusby. His boss usually led the way. However, due to circumstances there was a long silence.

“Yes,” they both said in unison.

For some unknown reason, they both stopped at the reception desk for a moment as if that was the right thing they should do.

Seeing how odd they looked the receptionist smiled and said: “Gentlemen, we are very busy this morning, so I must apologise if the breakfast is a little bit late. Our service is not up to our usual standard. You have no doubt heard that our chef has been taken to hospital and we are waiting for another one to arrive from the agency. It is as you British say all hands to the pump ”

“Is he all right,” stuttered Fusby, who turned and looked away from her.

“Oh, it was terrible sir, Poor Jacopo. The chef, have you not heard, was banged over the head by a criminal. He must have been mentally ill the

man who hit him. What poor Jacopo was doing wandering about the lakeside at midnight no one knows."

Ever the detective Lance asked, after swallowing hard, "What happen?"

"Oh, he was attacked when fishing by the lake, sir, last evening. He loves to fish does our Jacopo."

Fusby to keep up the pretence asked: "Was he alone?

"As far as we know sir, he was, as you say in Britain, mugged. I am sure the police will catch who has done this; for there are always people down by the lakeside. The criminal will not get away."

The two detectives looked at each other again and the waitress seeing them shocked said: "I will see you get your breakfast. Please be seated, and please be patient."

The two detectives after breakfast went to their room and there they sat on the double bed. Fusby looking out of the window and Lance stared at him like a guide dog waiting for instruction.

After a few moments, Lance spoke: "Right boss what do we do now?"

Fusby replied in a stern tone, “Act normal that is the only thing we can do,” and he stood up.

Lance stood up too and nodded, but he did not say anything else.

“We will take our walk as normal Lance, go round the town, take a boat trip then come back to the hotel mid afternoon. Remember as detectives we work in the shadows.”

“Right boss.”

58

An hour later, off the two virtual detectives went to the fresh water lake to do just that. After milling around at midday, along with many others down near the quayside, they bought tickets at the kiosk for the boat trip around the famous lake.

The ferry boat soon filled up with tourists and day trippers. Lance due to the botched attack on Stan the Man the night before was now to put it mildly hyper. He thought he recognised a man on the boat that he had arrested many years ago

back in Scotia: “Convicted drug seller…” he muttered to himself.

Fusby looked at him: “Who is selling drugs?”

“I remember him,” he kept muttering to himself in his usual gruff way. “He was involved in stolen computers too that guy, selling them onto the schools and universities…”

“Who was involved in stealing computers?”

“The man in the fur coat who got on behind us on the boat.”

When they were up on deck on the cruiser, Lance still kept looking around for the man, as if he was about to be approached by that very stranger he thought he had arrested many years ago.

Standing by the stern, Lance looked across the lake in the direction back to where their hotel was situated: “Do you remember the Tommy Morton case, boss?”

Fusby thought for a moment: “Yes, about stolen goods from China going to Europe. They had employed an agent at our end.”

“That’s right, thought I saw him on the boat.”

“Where?”

“Sitting inside the restaurant.”

“You are seeing things, Lance. Tommy Morton died years ago.”

“He looked like him.”

“How was he dressed.”

“Like a bohemian; the way he always did”

“How do you mean?”

“In a fur coat and Cossack hat,”

Fusby knew Lance was paranoid at the best of times. It was thought in the office by those who did not like him that he invented stories about gangsters he once knew to enhance his own reputation as a virtual cop. But this was not true.

Like most policemen, present and past, Lance thought everyone was a criminal and consequently every so called criminal he remembered preoccupied him.

“Everyone is breaking the law in one way or another are they not,” was another one of his famous quotations to the young cops back in the virtual office.

Lance imagined all kinds of things about what citizens were up to, and he was not shy at expressing his opinion about them to others and of course what he would do if they came near his orbit again.

“I tell you, I saw him in the restaurant.”

"Ok Lance. We will have a look later."

After the cruise, the two virtual detectives walked back to their hotel: "What are we going to do now boss," asked Lance in his usual suspicious way.

"We act normal," answered Fusby, and as they neared the entrance to the hotel, he added in an undertone. "Let the fishing incident die down."

"Ok, boss, we will lie low."

"In the afternoon we will see if h.q. can locate where the Covenanter is and then we will make a decision about what to do next."

Later that day in their hotel room they got Intel from the Virtual police back at base notifying them:

The Covenanter is using the supermarket restaurant close by your hotel to work on his computer using their WiFi.

Fusby lying on top of the bed alerted his deputy about this: "Right, if he is in there we will follow him."

As he jumped up as he usually did, he put his hand into his right hand tight trouser pocket

though this time instead of eating raisins from a small packet of something, he handed his cohort Lance a capsule: “That will see him off. Once that is put in his cappuccino we can dump him in the lake at night. If the staff send for an ambulance - if he is still alive - we will visit him in hospital in our official capacity as detectives.”

“Good thinking boss.”

“Right Lance, let us go to the restaurant in town and follow up on the info we got from h.q.”

They soon found out from the search engine that the restaurant was inside a well known department in the city. The info revealed that it was the type of place that offered reasonable prices as well as good wholesome food. Apparently, impressionable people along with shoppers, tourists and office workers all went there.

Fusby and Lance were told by h.q. that by the time they got there it would be busy and they should be careful not to cause a scene if they came across the Covenanter.

Lance and Fusby went straight to the restaurant on the forth floor, but could not see anyone there resembling their target, the Covenanter, in amongst the afternoon visitors.

The reason for that became clear once they sat down to eat their coffee and cake they had bought from the counter. As soon as they were spotted going into the supermarket a woman from the White church in Geneva, who worked in the supermarket, alerted Stan that two virtual detectives were now in the restaurant looking for him.

They must have found out he liked to go and work on his important new Confession of faith there. This had come about after the maid in the hotel had overheard the conversation between the two detectives when she was cleaning the room next to theirs. The maid who was also a member of the White church alerted the owner, and he contacted a friend who did an outreach with Stan for the church on the street.

"He is not here boss," grunted Lance, looking around him again, "What are we going to do now?"

Fusby could see there was now a delicious looking strudel cake in front of him that he had purchased from the counter. With that he smiled to himself knowing the trip would not be wasted.

"Let us relax and eat our coffee and cake that is what we will do."

Lance on the other hand looked holy miserable. He was not much into afternoon coffee and cake no matter what kind of food it was on the table.

"He has given us the slip again, boss."

Fusby lifted his cake from the tray and before biting into it, he smiled: "We will find him, Lance."

Lance did not look hungry, even though he had bought something for himself. Just as the two virtual detectives were taking afternoon tea together, as the Brits would say, suddenly a letter was delivered to their table by a young restaurant worker.

They both looked up at her like two trained dogs, as she placed a white letter between them. The ruddy faced girl had been standing in her chef outfit near to the entrance of the restaurant when they came in. They could see she now looked nervous: "This was handed to me sir, by an elderly woman. She asked me to give it to you. The envelope read Virtual Detectives

Lance looked at Fusby, and Fusby looked at Lance. The plumb young waitress to hide her embarrassment looked through the large window at the side of the restaurant out onto the lake. In

her white uniform and cap, everyone could see she looked every inch an honest girl.

The girl tried to sympathise, but her face grew even more redder as she tried to be natural. She just said: “I don’t know anything about this, sir. I was told to deliver it to you by a customer,” then hurried away.

One or two customers looked over at the detectives as she departed, and stared at them as if there was going to be a celebration, or a prize given out. However, nothing happened. Lance opened the letter and read in a slow deliberate monotone voice to his chief:

The Covenanter will meet you on the boat on the lake, 2pm this afternoon.

Lance on hearing his own words got quite excited, as much as was possible for a manic depressive. “Boss it is only 10 o’clock, I think this time we should disguise ourselves for this mission:” he said most definitely up for the adventure, “It may be a ruse, so I think we should go incognito.”

Fusby seemed surprised at how his partner had responded: “How can you be sure of that?”

“Trust me boss,” Lance said “I know a rues when I see one.”

Surreptitiously little Fusby picked up his teaspoon again to finish off what was left of the strudel cake that he had bought for himself: “Yes. could be a good idea.”

Lance continued “I noticed a party shop just round the corner from the hotel, next to that delicatessen that you went into, that sells second hand clothes, we past just the other day. I think we should pay them a visit.”

Knowing that his second in command was committed to the cause and that he did have the odd brainwave, he went along with him: “Okay, Lance let’s do it, Let’s see what we can find to disguise ourselves with, before we head for another sail along the lake in search of the Covenanter.”

02

At precisely 1pm that day the two Virtual detectives entered the charity shop in the middle of town. After looking around at the selection of goods on offer; for whatever reason they both hired Afghan coats, soft Australian cork hats, and sandals.

"How does this look?" asked Lance in a worried voice as he looked in the mirror.

Fusby staring at himself in the mirror next to him: "Just the job Lance," answered his chief who

was dressed likewise. “Any one asks, we are partygoers.”

Little did they know that a woman from the White church was across the street watching them from a secret location and sending a report back to her friends in the White church. She was pretending to be a tourist wandering around looking at the buildings. She had been told to keep an eye on the two odd balls by the manager of the hotel. The manager along with other members of the white church were keeping an eye on things.

At midday the woman from the White church sent a text this time to another friend in the church:

The Two detectives are now dressed like hippies are heading in the direction of the harbour.

The two virtual detectives could not understand why they could not see Stan the Man anywhere on the boat; h.q. had definitely confirmed to them that an agent was tailing the Covenanter. It had been reported he was seen on board.

“He may be hiding down below,” Lance moaned, as if speaking to himself.

The cruise was pleasant enough and the weather was just about right for a sail. They were getting to know the places along the shore now.

However, halfway through the tour the elderly woman who had been watching them coming and going out of the fancy dress shop sat next to Lance on the boat.

“I am a Protestant,” she said in a natural voice and handed him a tract with a picture of John Calvin on it.

There was only one thing Lance feared more than religion and that was a woman. Every one in the office knew that. He believed there was no such thing as a righteous woman never mind a religious one.

Lance stared at her, as she spoke to him in perfect English: “I am a member of the White church here and tonight we have a special guest from the land of Scotia. He is going to be joining us in an hour. Would you like to come and meet him? He is a great speaker. It will take place in a private house just over by the lake there, and she pointed across the lake to where it was. “We are having a special afternoon service and there will

be a good gathering for our friend. You will be able to meet all our the guests after the service over a nice cup of tea."

This was too good an opportunity to miss, and the two virtual detectives agreed wholeheartedly at once to go along.

"Oh, that sounds nice," salivated Fusby. And I can see it is not far from where we get off the boat," he added cautiously.

As the religious woman welcomed them inside the small apartment at the front of the lake, Lance whispered to Fusby "She is a spiritualist or a medium; I can tell boss."

There were many guests there. Presently, they were introduced to an elderly man and his wife who were sitting in comfortable seats just inside the well furnished room.

A few moments later they all went through to the dining room that looked back out onto the lake. After instructing them where they should all sit around a large circular table, the curtains were shut and the luxurious living room disappeared. Only a lamp in the corner gave light to the room.

With both detectives now sitting around the table, the service was ready to begin: "Does

anyone have any intimations for the church?" asked the lady, who they had met on the boat

Lance right away put his big foot in it. "We have lost our friend from Scotia; he has simply disappeared. I wonder if you can help us find him?"

The woman, as if in a trance, put her hand in the air. Then replied to the gathering: "Friends before the service starts, does anyone know where the missing man from Scotia is?"

Fusby was not sure what was going on. He shook his head as he looked at the strange gathering around him, then he stared at Lance as if to warn him as to what he was doing.

Just at that moment, the door opened leading to the kitchen and in to the room came Stan the Man.

"Yes here I am here, my dear."

"Gentlemen is this the man you are looking for?" asked the lady they met on the boat.

Both Lance and Fusby stood up they knew they had been duped; for a television crew was right behind her.

Some other men appeared and two woman all from the white church from a side room.

“Now gentlemen it is quite simple, you will know I have been writing the New Confession of faith. Would you like to give me your testimony as to why you have been sent here by Mag the Monster to kill the Covenanter and that you repent of this evil on behalf of the nation that sent you. If you do not, you will be on the evening news tonight. You will get an opportunity to speak there about it.”

The two virtual detectives. Both knew the game was up and moreover they knew that they dare not go back home now; for Mag the Monster would have them killed as soon as they set foot on the land of Scotia. They would have to ask for clemency and for asylum through the members of the White church abroad.

Stan now planned his return to the land of Scotia to declare The New Confession of Faith for his nation. He knew the people of Scotia would rise up now against the virtual state and their leader Mag the Monster, and return it to a Christian land.

The music from the novel is titled Virtual Numpties:
https://open.spotify.com/album/0J5tppAxcWd1oC0muqbNFb

walkerjohna.wordpress.com

www.cosmos-original-productions.co.uk